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# **NORTH TRENTON/ BATTLE MONUMENT CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD**

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**OUTLINE WITH CONTENT • NOV. 19<sup>TH</sup>, 2020**

# NORTH TRENTON/ BATTLE MONUMENT CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD

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Submitted to the U.S. Department  
of Housing and Urban Development,  
by the Trenton Housing Authority in  
partnership with

isles



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## **STEERING COMMITTEE**

- City of Trenton Division of Planning
- City of Trenton Housing and Economic Development Department
- Donnelly Homes Resident Council President
- Donnelly Homes Resident Council Sergeant at Arms
- Grace Cathedral Fellowship Ministries
- Isles, Inc.
- Mercer County Community College
- Smith Family Foundation
- Trenton Housing Authority

## **RESIDENT AMBASSADORS**

- Dorothy Lang
- Ashley Marshall
- Virginia Marshall
- Darnella Coates White

## **HOUSING TASK FORCE**

- Donnelly Homes Residents
- Isles, Inc.
- NJ Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency
- Trenton Housing Authority (Lead)

## **NEIGHBORHOOD TASK FORCE**

- Capital Region Minority Chamber of Commerce
- City of Trenton Division of Planning (Lead)
- Donnelly Homes Residents
- Ewing Township Division of Planning and Zoning
- Grace Cathedral Fellowship Ministries
- Isles, Inc.
- Mercer County Planning Department
- New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Local Planning Services
- New Jersey State Treasurer
- Trenton Police Department

## **PEOPLE TASK FORCE**

- Capital Area YMCA
- Capital Region Minority Chamber of Commerce
- Capital Health
- Christian Seix Academy
- The College of New Jersey
- Donnelly Homes Residents
- Isles, Inc. (Lead)
- Mercer County Community College
- Mercer County One-Stop Career Center

- Mercer Street Friends
- Smith Family Foundation
- Trenton Music Makers
- Trenton Health Team
- Trenton Public Schools
- Young Scholars Institute

## **ACTION ACTIVITY COMMITTEE**

- City of Trenton Housing and Economic Development Department
- City of Trenton Department of Recreation, Natural Resources, & Culture
- Donnelly Homes Residents
- Smith Family Foundation
- Trenton Housing Authority
- Capital Area YMCA
- Others to be named

## **TRENTON HOUSING AUTHORITY COMMISSIONERS**

- Darlene Weldon Gordon
- Gary Gentry
- John C. Raines
- Nikesia Dotts
- Sonya Wilkins
- Kim Y. Taylor
- Clifton Anderson, Chairman

## **PLANNING COORDINATOR**

- WRT

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**01/**

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**EXECUTIVE  
SUMMARY**

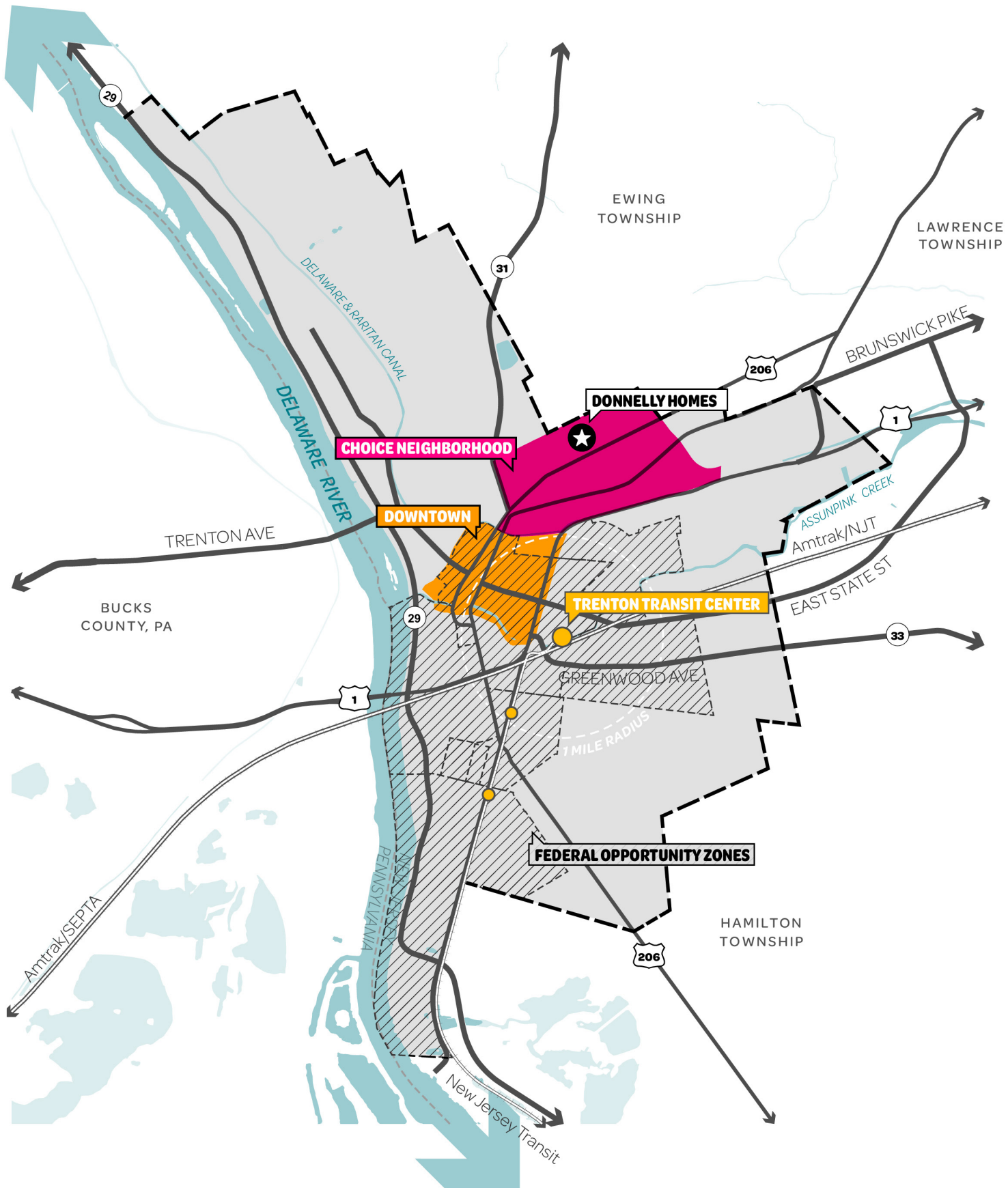


# 01/ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The next chapter in the story of the North Trenton / Battle Monument Choice Neighborhood will be told by the residents and stakeholders who rolled up their sleeves to fill out surveys, who braved a pandemic to attend events, who learned new skills as they were thrust into new territory, who sowed relationships on small seeds of trust, and who spoke up with courage when it was easier to remain silent. This Choice Neighborhoods Outline with Content is a summary of the activity that has transpired in the past 15 months, and a glimpse of where this community is headed in the next five years. However, it has been 15 months unlike any other, particularly for low-income, majority minority communities like North Trenton. Together, we witnessed a debilitating pandemic ravage through our society, our economy, and our institutions—disproportionately hurting poor black families. Together, we witnessed social/racial injustice reach a breaking point nationally, and wondered how neighborhoods like North Trenton can join the dialogue towards reconciliation and healing. This story remains to be written.

**North Trenton / Battle Monument Choice Neighborhood will be a thriving mixed-income African American neighborhood that fully leverages its unique neighborhood assets—commercial corridors, opportunity sites, schools, parks, churches, service providers; proximity to adjacent assets - Downtown Trenton, Capitol Health, Ewing Township; and its human capital—youth, resident leaders, entrepreneurs, and business owners...**

This Outline with Content document includes the following components. History: How does the story of this neighborhood fit into the larger, richer history of Trenton—with its revolutionary roots, its industrial heritage, and its American melting pot background? Trenton Today: What is the demographic and housing profile of the neighborhood today compared to the city as a whole? And how does this compare with other comparable capital cities? And how does a distressed 350-unit public housing site play a role in its transformation? Next, the document will illustrate the planning process including how the planning team is structured, and the coalescing of key partners and their important roles. The planning process chapter will also illuminate how engagement was conducted safely, keeping in mind residents’ needs in a particularly challenging time. Sixty percent of Donnelly Homes households completed needs assessment surveys, and they revealed formerly unknown truths such as their strong desire to return to the site post redevelopment, their perception of high crime, and desire to invest in education. This Choice plan will address these and other input in meaningful, measurable ways.



^ **FIGURE 1. CITY CONTEXT MAP**

SOURCE: NJGIN

Most importantly, this document will provide a framework that begins to tell new Housing, Neighborhood, and People stories. Stories that will recommend achievable paths towards actual transformation. A new Housing story will be guided by firm principles voiced by Donnelly Homes residents and will be focused on three main parts – (1) reversing the decline of North Trenton via targeted demolition, stabilization and infill investment, (2) reimagining the future of Donnelly Homes, and (3) rebuilding wealth among North Trentonians. A new People story will be told from the perspective of public housing and neighborhood residents, focused on the following priorities – (1) healthy and resilient body and mind, (2) removing barriers to gainful employment, and (3) doubling down on educating children of all ages. A new Neighborhood story will be focused on (1) shoring up cherished neighborhood assets, (2) investing in our commercial corridors, and (3) rethinking policing and public safety in the context of the neighborhood and larger national dialogue.

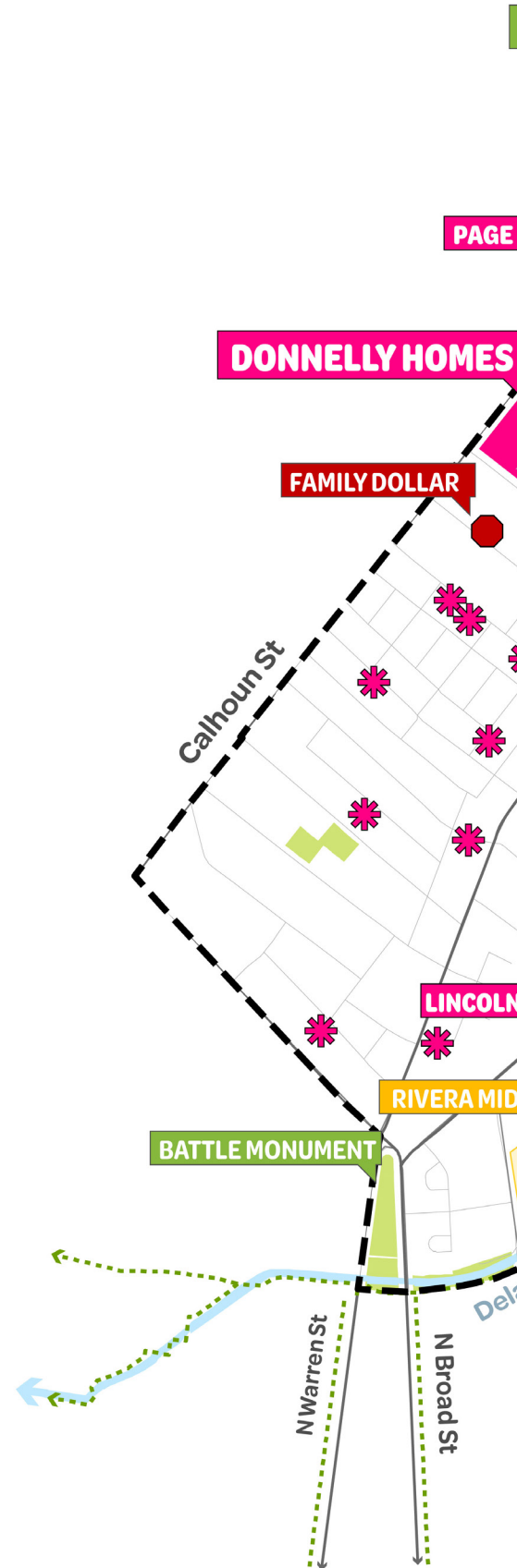
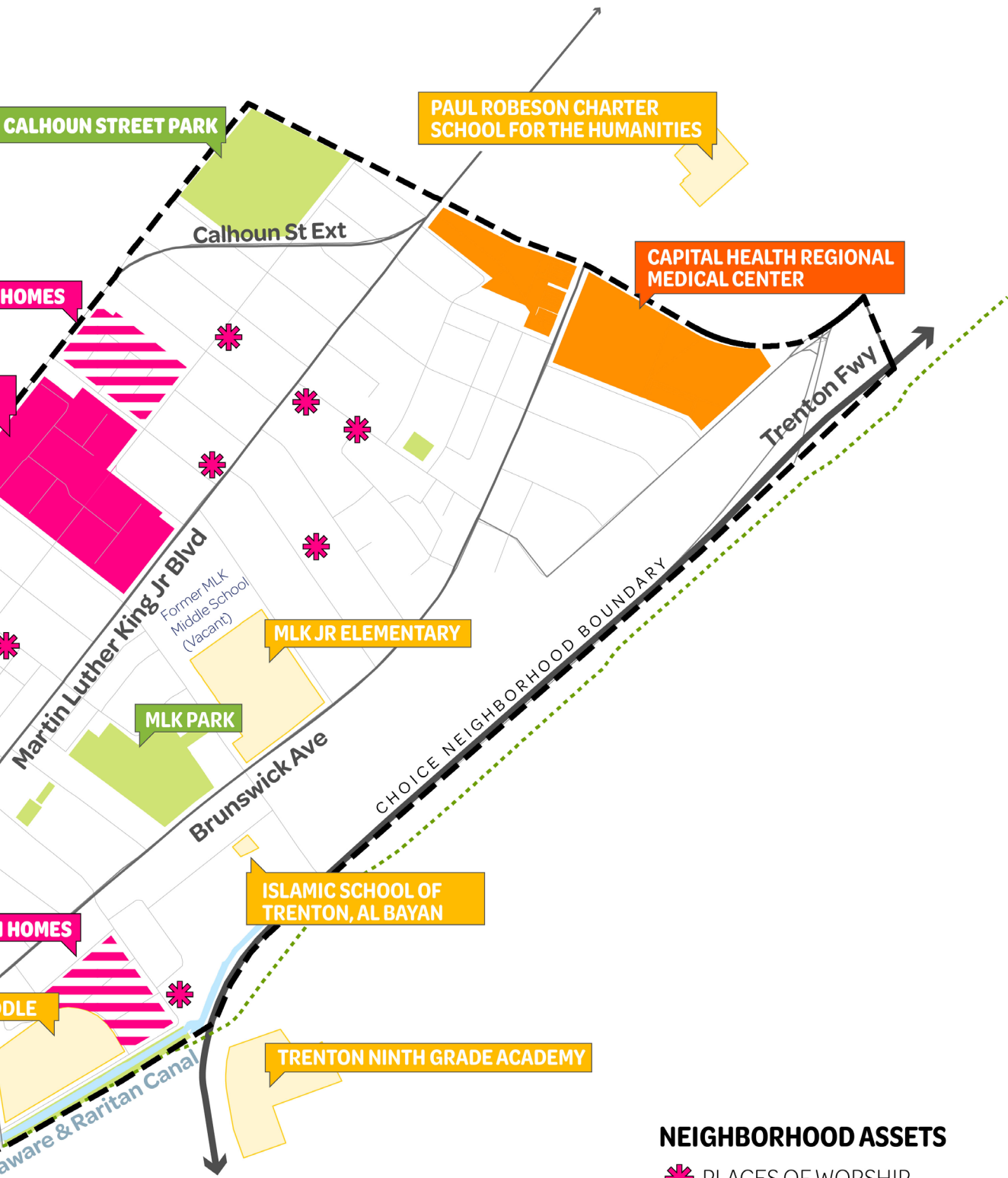


FIGURE 2. NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS >



**NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS**

-  PLACES OF WORSHIP
-  SCHOOLS
-  GREEN SPACES
-  HEALTHCARE

While ripe with potential, the North Trenton / Battle Monument Choice Neighborhood is struggling. A quick comparison of the neighborhood to the City of Trenton illustrates the contrast. Further comparison to the residents of Donnelly Homes underscores an even greater need.

Based on a comprehensive Needs Assessment Survey of over 60 percent of Donnelly Homes households, 15 percent are unemployed versus about 9 percent in the neighborhood and city. Eighty-nine percent of Donnelly Homes residents earn below the Trenton median household income of \$34,476; 43 percent of households have income of less than \$10,000. Approximately 30 percent of Donnelly Homes residents are under 18. Ninety-four percent of households are headed by someone who is single, divorced/separated, or widowed, and based on the survey, approximately 80 percent of households are headed by women.

Despite these challenges, residents find a source of strength in the deep sense of community at Donnelly Homes and in their pride of the North Trenton neighborhood. It is this strength that will make the difference in reimagining Donnelly Homes and revitalizing the Choice Neighborhood in a way that all who live there will benefit and prosper.



**POPULATION**



**AGE**

MEDIAN AGE  
 UNDER 18  
 18-24  
 25-54  
 55-64  
 65+



**RACE/  
 ETHNICITY**

AFRICAN AMERICAN  
 WHITE  
 OTHER  
 HISPANIC



**POVERTY RATE**



**UNEMPLOYMENT**



**HOUSEHOLDS** # HOUSEHOLDS  
 AVG. HOUSEHOLD SIZE  
 SINGLE-MOTHER HH (2010)  
 MEDIAN HH INCOME



**HOUSING**

TOTAL # UNITS  
 HOMEOWNERSHIP RATE  
 VACANCY  
 MEDIAN HOME VALUE

**FIGURE 3. DEMOGRAPHIC COMPARISON**

SOURCE: \*2019 ESRI ESTIMATES BASED ON 2017 ACS DATA, DATA PULLED FROM ESRI BAO. ALL OTHER CITY OF TRENTON AND CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD DATA THAT IS NOT MARKED WITH AN ASTERISK IS PULLED FROM THE CHOICE APPLICATION. ALL OTHER DONNELLY HOMES DATA IS FROM THA (\*\* IS 12/5/2019, \*\*\* IS TIME OF APPLICATION).

CITY OF TRENTON	CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD	DONNELLY HOMES
86,370	5,754	591**
34.2 24%* 10%* 45%* 11%* 11%*	34.4 26%* 9%* 41%* 12%* 12%*	31.9* 30%* 10%* 39%* 11%* 10%*
51% 25% 24% 38%	84% 6% 10% 14%	95% 4% 1% 5%
28%*	40%	N/A
9.2%*	9.1%*	N/A
28,628 2.82 45%* \$34,476	2,228 2.57 51%* \$23,961	327** 1.81** N/A N/A
33,438* 28.7% 14.2%* \$115,562*	2,708* 25.3% 23.0% \$105,065*	376*** N/A 8.0%*** N/A

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**02 /**

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**A STORIED  
HISTORY**



# 02/ A STORIED HISTORY

## HISTORY OF THE CITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD

One of the great strengths that the North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood has to build on is its long and storied history, which mirrors national and regional stories but also tells a story of its own. North Trenton’s layered history, rich heritage and current identity can be understood best through periods of development—each leaving their mark on the neighborhood, its traditions and its culture; and each deserving of its place in the stories people share about what makes this community unique, valuable, and deserving of the investment and support it has been denied for so long.

### EARLY SETTLEMENT & AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE ERA (1679 – 1800)

The first European settlers of the area that would become Trenton were English Quakers who arrived in 1679. This period gave our neighborhood the “Battle Monument” aspect of its identity courtesy of the 1776 Battle of Trenton that gave Washington his first victory in the American Revolutionary War, which was later commemorated in 1896 with the monument that marks the gateway to the neighborhood from Downtown Trenton. In the decades following the American Revolutionary War, Trenton briefly served as the U.S. Capitol and then the State Capital for New Jersey. During this time period, there was little development other than a few estates and two main roads, Princeton and Brunswick, which were built to connect Trenton to points north. These roads and the lines that divided private estates are still visible as the skeleton of the neighborhood—visible in the way they connect to their neighbors and the way that its eclectic housing styles shift from one block to the next.

### 19TH CENTURY INDUSTRIAL URBANIZATION (1801 – 1900)

This period brought a patchwork of industrial development to our otherwise sparsely developed lowland marshy neighborhood. The fragmented street networks at the edges of the North Trenton/ Battle Monument neighborhood are a product of

this era of development when industrial businesses developed organically, independently, and incrementally without the shared infrastructure and planned road network that guided residential development.

A BIT OF HISTORY

**1679**  
First European settlers, English Quakers, arrive in the area that would become Trenton.

Citywide

**1776**  
Battle of Trenton, George Washington's first military victory.

**1784**  
Trenton briefly serves as US Capital

**1790**  
Trenton becomes the State Capital for New Jersey.

Neighborhood

**Battle Monument, memorializing the Battle of Trenton, opens almost a century later in 1896.** It becomes the namesake and gateway icon for the Five Points / Battle Monument neighborhood.

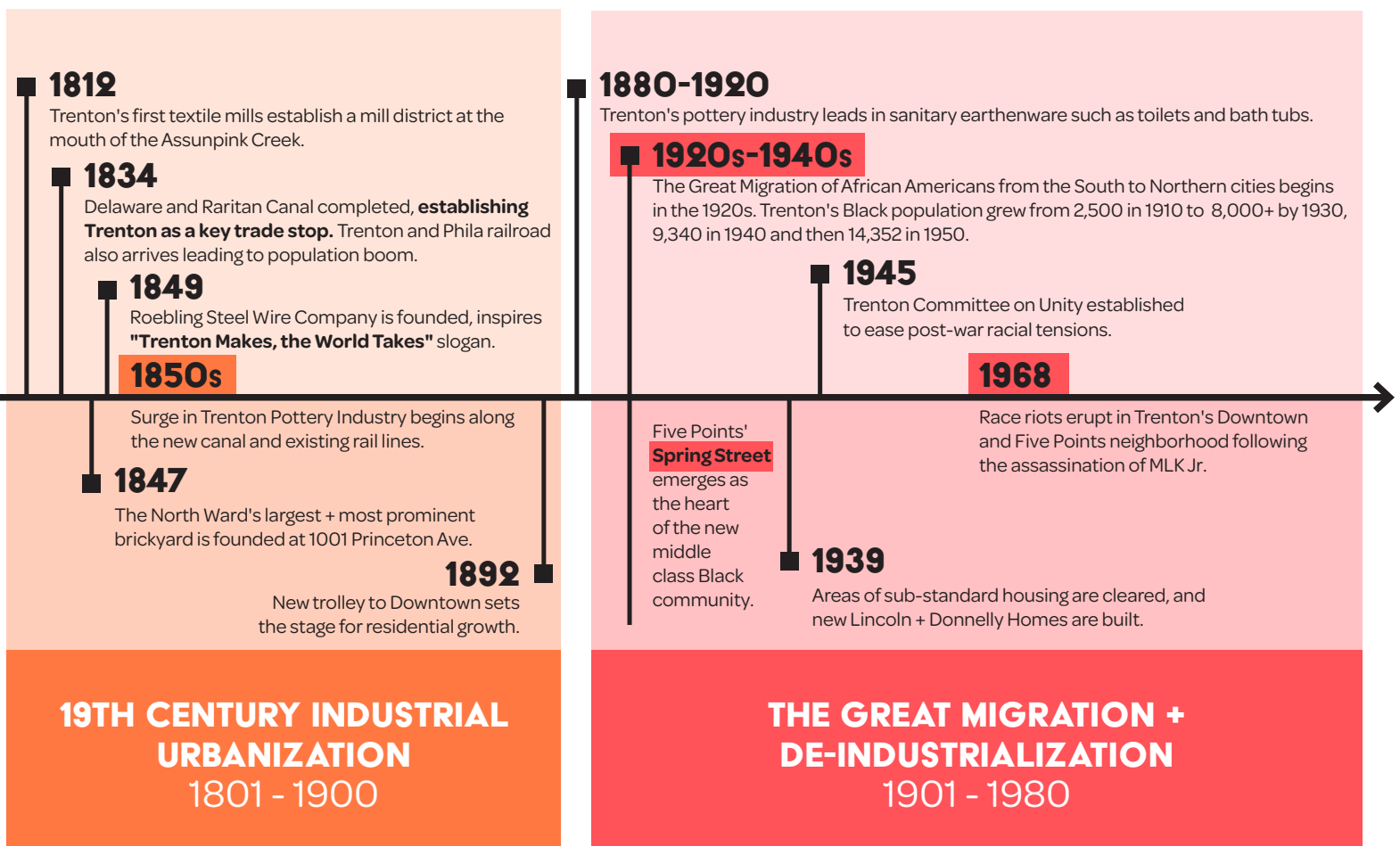
**EARLY SETTLEMENT + AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE ERA**  
1679 - 1800

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed, shipyards, brick factories, pottery factories, and nurseries clustered along the canal, rail, and main roads and attracted new workers and residents, creating a magnet that would spur the development of this area as a true mixed-use neighborhood. As the Delaware and Raritan Canal Trail is extended to serve and connect to more neighborhoods, it has the potential to serve as a powerful catalyst for telling the story of Trenton's industrialists, makers, inventors and workers as we strive to reconnect and reverse the isolation caused by the original fragmented industrial development of this era. As we begin to tell these stories through the planning effort, it is important to go beyond a narrow, nostalgic version of its history and instead to leverage the

historic canal industrial district not only as a way of attracting and supporting 21<sup>st</sup> century "clean and green" industry but also as a way of lifting up and dignifying the role of the workers and families who lived in this neighborhood and lent their talents to these industries.

Come 1880, residential development in North Trenton picked up the pace as the trolley system expanded and new schools were built.

Former estates and scattered homesteads gave way to more systematic entrepreneurial development of "rows" of housing that shared design elements and were clustered along one (often new) long, continuous east-west street or "row" connecting the major north-south arteries



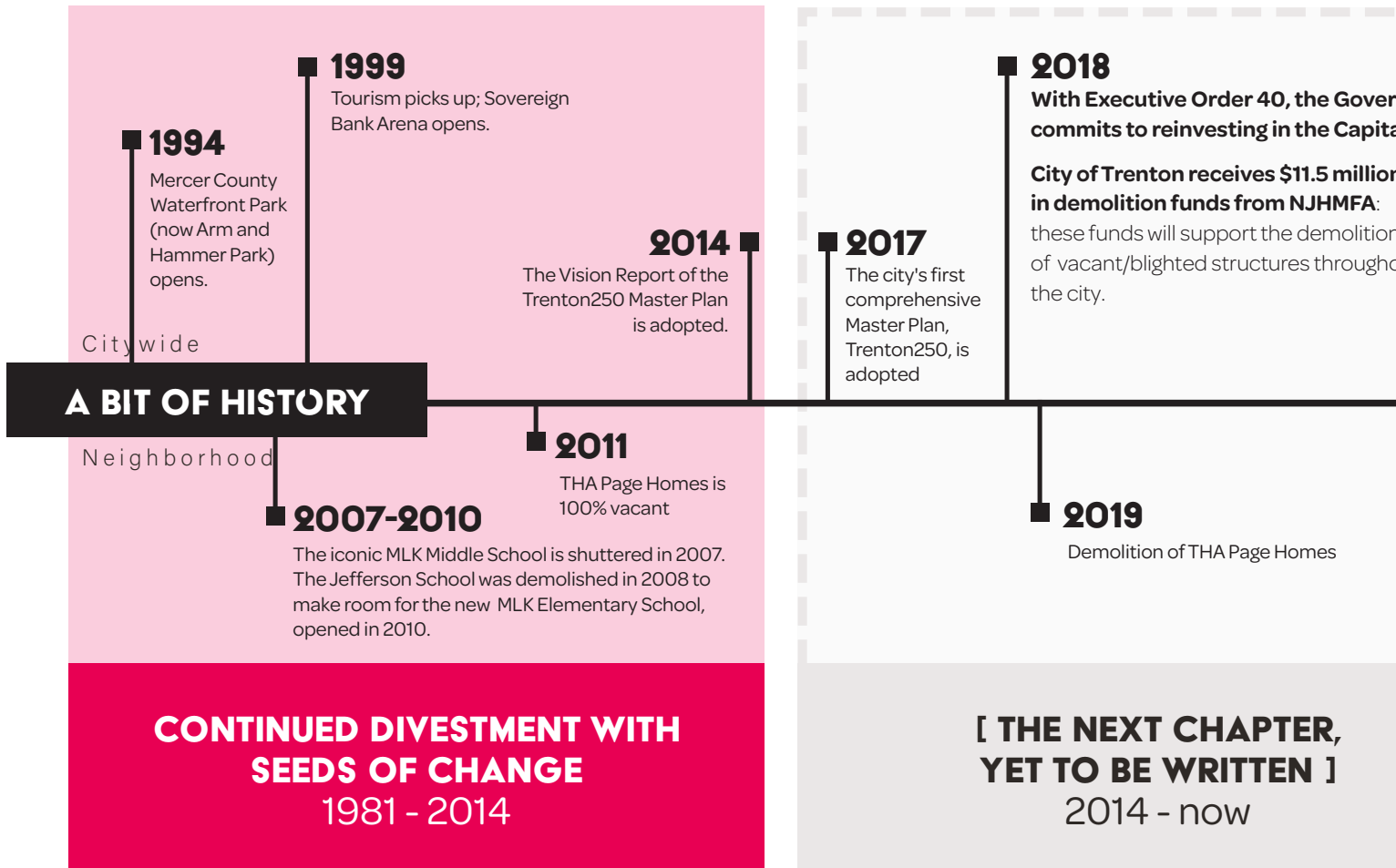
(Princeton and Brunswick avenues). This period of development gave the neighborhood its characteristic mix of housing styles and also saw the foundation of an impressive variety of Black social, cultural and educational institutions that helped to anchor a growing Black cultural elite who made their home in the North Ward of Trenton.

**THE GREAT MIGRATION & DE-INDUSTRIALIZATION (1901 – 1980)**

The Battle Monument / Five Points neighborhood fills out in the early decades of this time period and links North Trenton’s characteristic diversity of architectural styles and mixture of residential and industrial land uses with Downtown Trenton’s office

and commercial district and becomes the home to the City’s first Junior High School (Junior No. 1), which was later renamed Martin Luther King Junior High.

Throughout the middle of this period, North Trenton experiences dramatic growth and becomes the cultural and economic hub of Black life in Trenton as the city grows and evolves with the influx of new residents from the Great Migration (1920s-1940s). Spring Street—located just outside of the Choice neighborhood—becomes the backbone of the North Ward’s Black social and cultural life. The Great Migration coincides with the neighborhood becoming home to the City’s first public housing sites—Lincoln and Donnelly Homes. Throughout this



time period, North Trenton was known as one of the most racially integrated neighborhoods of Trenton, a place where neighbors of different races not only shared space but also respected one another and got along. The legacy of this racially integrated period of time for North Trenton is still a source of pride today and something some residents hope to restore in the decades to come.

As this period comes to a close, North Trenton reckons with economic instability and rising racial tensions as the nation as a whole and industrial cities like Trenton in particular are forced to adjust to a cascading set of changes in the basic economic structure and social norms that communities were used to. As in most U.S. cities, Trenton convulsed with civic uprisings in 1968 following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., with the heaviest damage and long-term divestment falling on the North Ward's Five Points neighborhood and parts of Downtown Trenton. The civic uprisings of the 60s served as punctuation emphasizing the incredible suffering and struggle that Black residents in particular endured as they worked to find stability, safety and opportunity in the emerging economic and social order. **[Note: In the Draft Plan, we hope to be able to tell a more complex, nuanced story of what led to the Race Riots in Trenton, how they impacted North Trenton and the long-term legacy they left behind. Our goal here will be to re-contextualize the Race Riots so that Black residents are not blamed for the white flight and divestment from their neighborhood, as they often are now in the way the story gets told. The current narrative is incomplete and harmful to residents' sense of pride and self-worth and contributes to the continued lack of investment from outsiders and institutions who are scared away by the incomplete history they have learned. We**

**see this as an important way that deliberately retelling history can support healing, social understanding, and re-investment.]**

### **CONTINUED DIVESTMENT WITH SEEDS OF CHANGE (1981 – 2014)**

During this era, Trenton's economy continues to face challenges. Declining property values and the large proportion of properties owned by tax-exempt government and non-profit entities damage the City's financial health and hinder its ability to provide basic services. This trickles down to our neighborhood where vacancy and divestment increase, undermining quality of life and economic vibrancy. Gang activity feeds an increasingly territorial understanding of the city with wards and families accumulating an antagonistic relationship to one another as they each struggled to survive through the economic hardship and shrinking opportunities available to Trentonians with those that were closest to them.

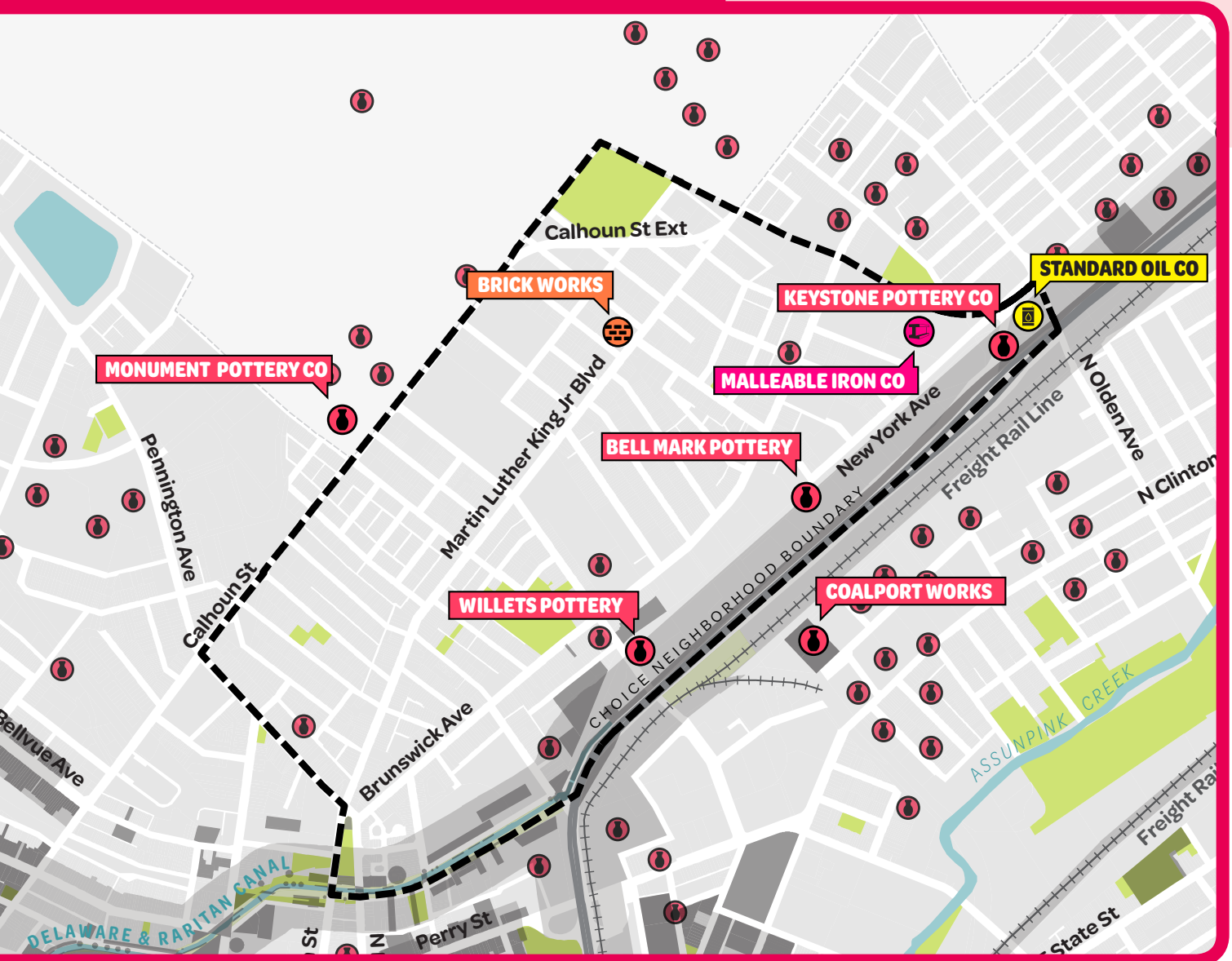
### **THE NEXT CHAPTER, YET TO BE WRITTEN..... (2014 – NOW)**

Today the North Trenton area retains its characteristic blend of diverse styles of residential, commercial, and industrial areas—a truly mixed-use neighborhood with a rich heritage and a legacy of racial integration and a long tradition of being a hub for Black and African American culture in Trenton. As we embark on this plan, we are determined to take an active role in shaping not only what happens in this neighborhood but also how people tell its story and what it is known for.

# HISTORY & HERITAGE SITES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE


### INDUSTRIAL LANDMARKS



#### Industrial Landmarks

-  Pottery Industry
-  Brick Industry
-  Oil Industry
-  Iron Industry

#### NJ Historic Preservation Office

-  Historic Property
-  Historic District

Throughout the neighborhood and surrounding community remnants of Trenton's industrial heritage remain. While many buildings are now gone, a number of them still exist and have been repurposed for new uses. The industrial legacy is also visible in the imprint of historic rail right-of-ways and a fragmented street grid.

## INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE SITES TODAY

Monument Pottery Co  
*Replaced, housing & market*



Keystone Pottery Co  
*Demolished, not replaced*



Coalport Works  
*Buildings still exist*



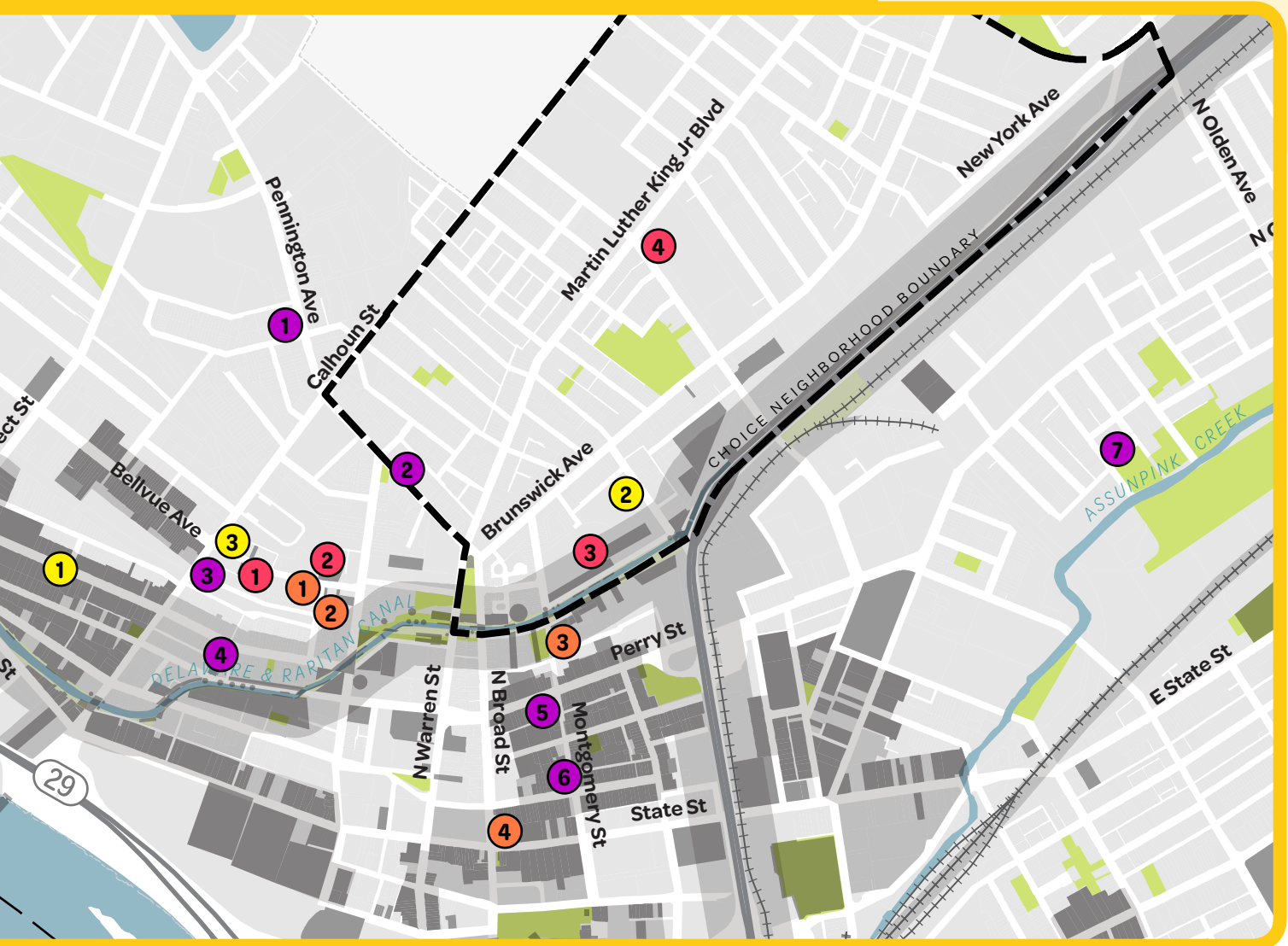
Willets Pottery  
*Replaced*



# HISTORY & HERITAGE SITES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

### AFRICAN-AMERICAN LANDMARKS



#### African-American Landmarks

##### Church and Cemetery

- ① Union Baptist Church
- ② Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd Catholic Church
- ③ Shiloh Baptist Church
- ④ St. Monica's Episcopal Church
- ⑤ Mount Zion A.M.E. Church
- ⑥ Friends Burying Ground
- ⑦ Locus Hill Cemetery

##### School

- ① Bellevue Avenue Colored School
- ② Higbee Street School
- ③ New Lincoln School
- ④ Jr High School Number 1

##### Neighborhood + Other

- ① Spring Street Neighborhood
- ② Lincoln Homes
- ③ Dr Henry J. Austin house

##### Social and Community Organization

- ① Union Republican Club
- ② Carver Center
- ③ YWCA Montgomery Branch
- ④ Eclectic Club

SOURCE: TRENTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY INVENTORY OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SITES

Within the Choice neighborhood and immediately surrounding it are numerous landmarks with significant connections to African-American heritage in Trenton. Many of these sites are still utilized today as places of worship and community service.

## INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE SITES TODAY

Lincoln Homes  
*Still in Existence*



Lincoln School  
*Now Luis Munoz-Rivera Elementary + Middle School*



Jr High School No. 1  
*Still in Existence, no longer operating as a school.*



Our Lady of the Divine Shepherd  
Catholic Church  
*Still in Existence*



**Join us in asking and seeking to answer.... How will people view this era in the history of Trenton and our neighborhood? What will Trenton look and feel like on its 250th Anniversary in 2042? Will Trenton become a premier economic and cultural center built on arts, industry, and education? How will the city work towards this? What role will our neighborhood and our residents play in this next chapter?**

The Vision Report of the Trenton 250 Master Plan was adopted in 2014, with adoption of the full plan following in 2017. Trenton 250, which we will explore in greater depth in the next section set a collaborative tone for how the City and State could work together to bring a new sense of hope, opportunity and momentum to the City of Trenton. Soon after adoption, the Governor of New Jersey signed Executive Order 40, a commitment to reinvest in the Capital City, including making available the funds needed for targeted demolition to restore stability and confidence in Trenton’s neighborhoods and to make way for a brighter future.

## **NORTH TRENTON TODAY**

### **TRENTON’S 250<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY—AN OCCASION TO LOOK FORWARD**

Adopted in 2014, Trenton250 is the City’s comprehensive plan, which will guide the City’s development through 2042. It forms the basis for the ongoing update of the Land Development Ordinance (LDO) and Redevelopment Plans.



**^ FIGURE 4. A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN TRENTON**

It is centered around the following guiding principles:

- Foster social opportunity and a vibrant economy through education.
- Establish a preeminent arts and culture destination.
- Build a safe city.
- Advance good governance.
- Promote civic unity and pride.
- Cultivate a healthy city.
- Reinforce high-quality neighborhoods and a 24/7 downtown Trenton.
- Capitalize on location and urban form to support a multi-modal transportation network.



Trenton250 includes 5 district plans (Downtown, West, East, South, North). The North District plan covers this neighborhood and calls for a coordinated effort to:

- ▶ Strengthen connections to Downtown, Cadwalader Park and the trail network,
- ▶ Attract modern industry and economic development, and
- ▶ Create stable, strong neighborhoods with deep sense of community, history, diverse living opportunities, small retail.

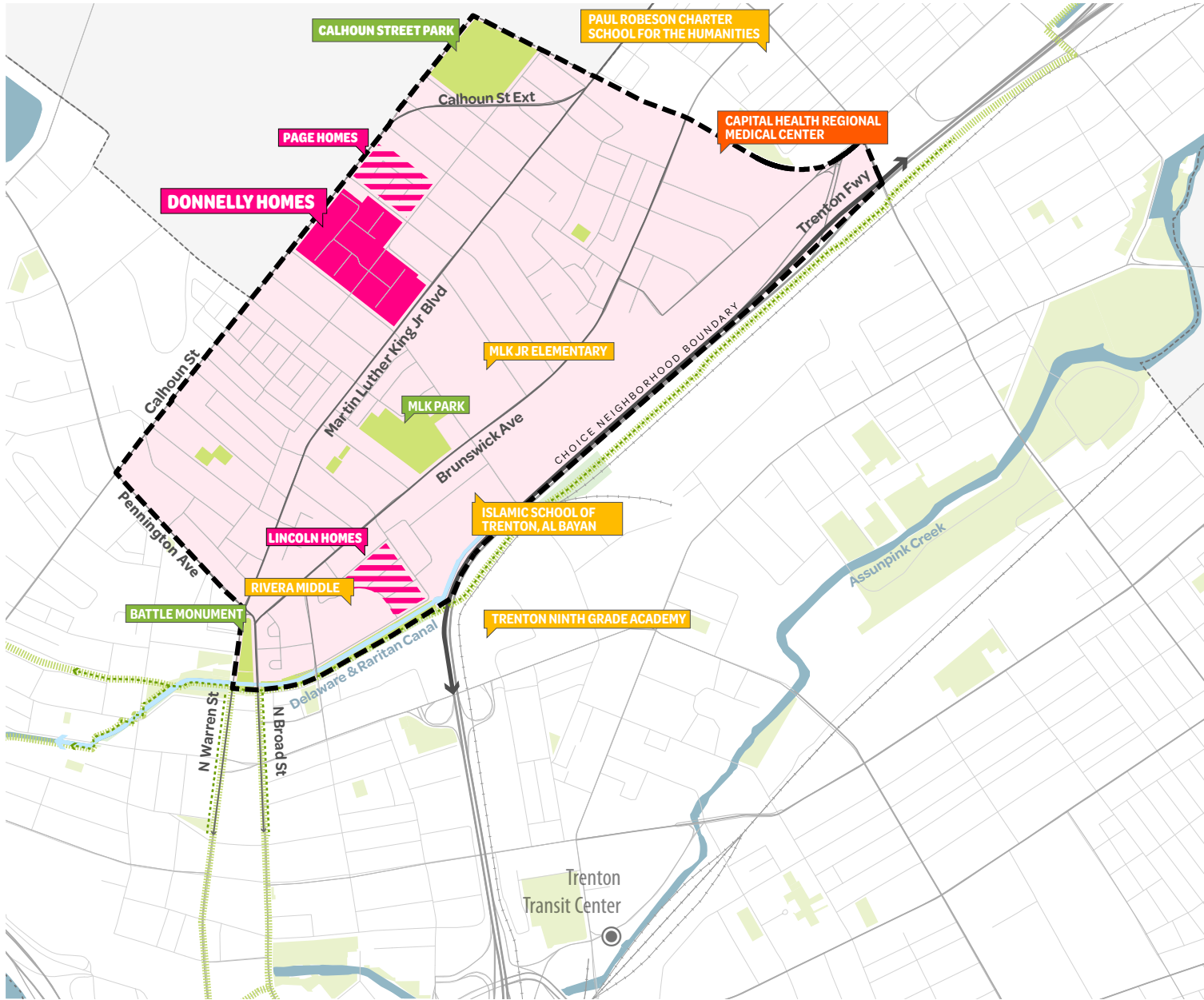
Some of the specific projects and opportunities identified in Trenton250 to achieve the goals outlined above are illustrated in the aerial diagram shown here.

## NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER & ASSETS

Perhaps the most visually prominent asset for the North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood is the monument itself. Situated at the gateway to the neighborhood from Downtown Trenton, the monument gives the neighborhood a sense of historical grandeur and is a source of pride for many residents. The Delaware and Raritan Canal, and the trail alongside it, runs just south of Battle Monument, separating our neighborhood from downtown. But, while the Battle Monument may steal the show, it is by no means the only asset anchoring the charming residential community with small-scale walkable streets and legacy of “walk-to-work” industrial areas of North Trenton.



NEIGHBORHOOD ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER



^ **FIGURE 5. NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS**

There is a wide array of significant African American historic landmarks within and just outside the neighborhood, especially along Bellevue Avenue and North Montgomery Street, that could serve as more significant gateways and cultural corridors leading into and through the neighborhood. Many of these important sites for the history of the African American community in Trenton remain unmarked and unprotected without the restoration and interpretive signage they deserve. For instance, there could be an opportunity to create an interpretive trail loop that helps to tell the story of these important institutions and the individuals that contributed to them.

Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard forms the backbone of public life of the neighborhood with many small corner stores and historic brick buildings that are built right up to the property line, giving it the intimate feel of a small-town main street. The neighborhood is home to a rich variety of housing styles with lots of unique historic details like decorative cornices, dormers, arched windows with keystones, porches, bay windows and pitched roofs.

The neighborhood also benefits from three Trenton Housing Authority housing sites—Page Homes, Donnelly Homes and Lincoln Homes—which have served as stabilizing forces for the neighborhood. The former Junior 1 School building (now vacant), sits at the mid-point of MLK Boulevard’s route through the neighborhood and is immediately opposite the Donnelly Homes site. It is remembered fondly by many long-term residents who went to school there as children. The Capital City Sports Complex as well as MLK Park and pool are each a short walk from MLK Boulevard, as are the local public schools—Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School and Rivera Middle School—and Capital Health Regional Medical Center, which is one of the largest employers in the area other than the State of New Jersey.

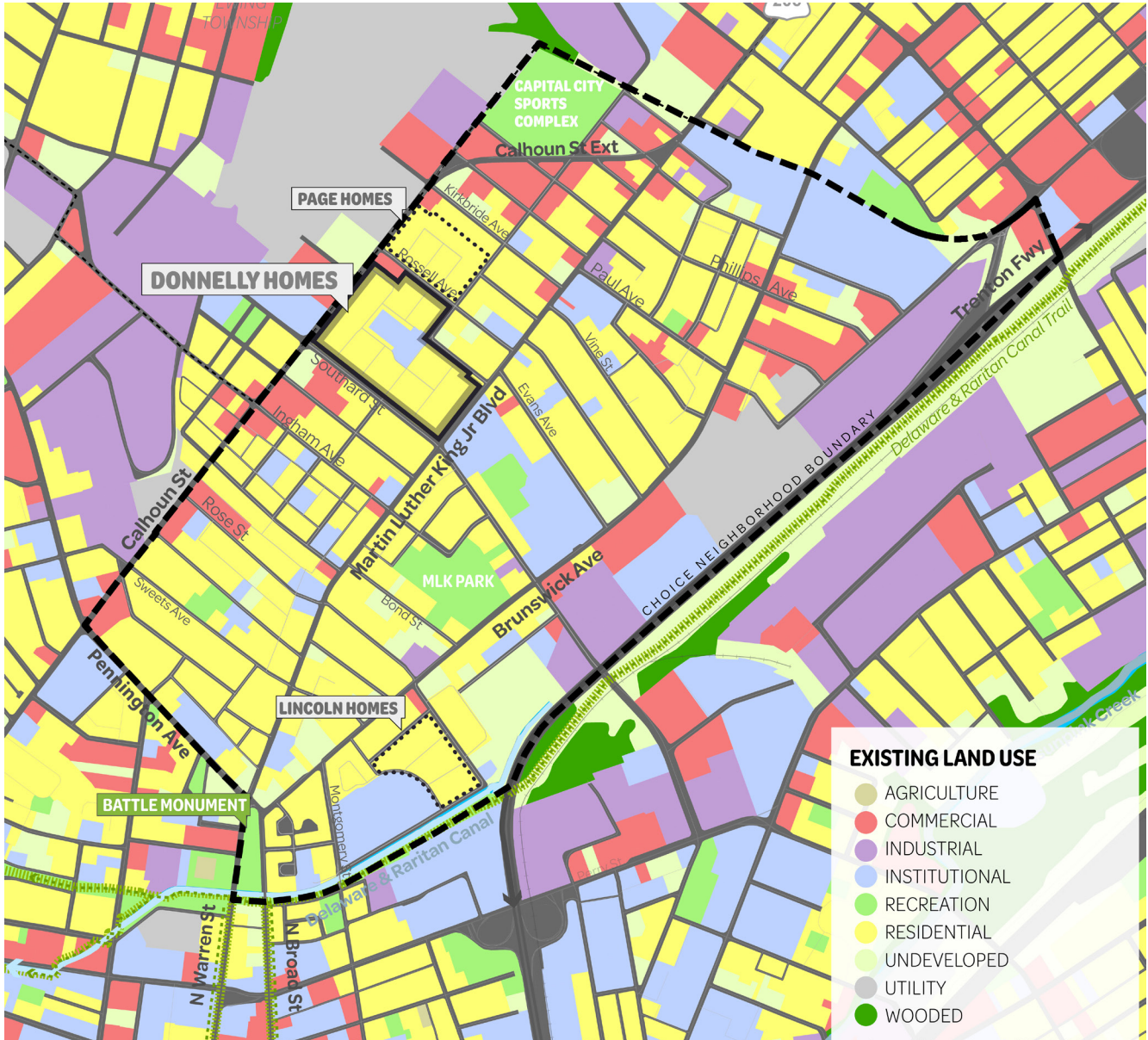
Despite the rich network of parks, schools, employers and faith-based institutions, the North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood has struggled to capitalize on its “good bones” because of the economic hardship and structural divestment that has left many of its streets and public spaces feeling unsafe, dirty, or poorly maintained, and has resulted in many private properties being abandoned or simply looking a bit worse for wear.

## **LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

### **EXISTING LAND USE + ZONING**

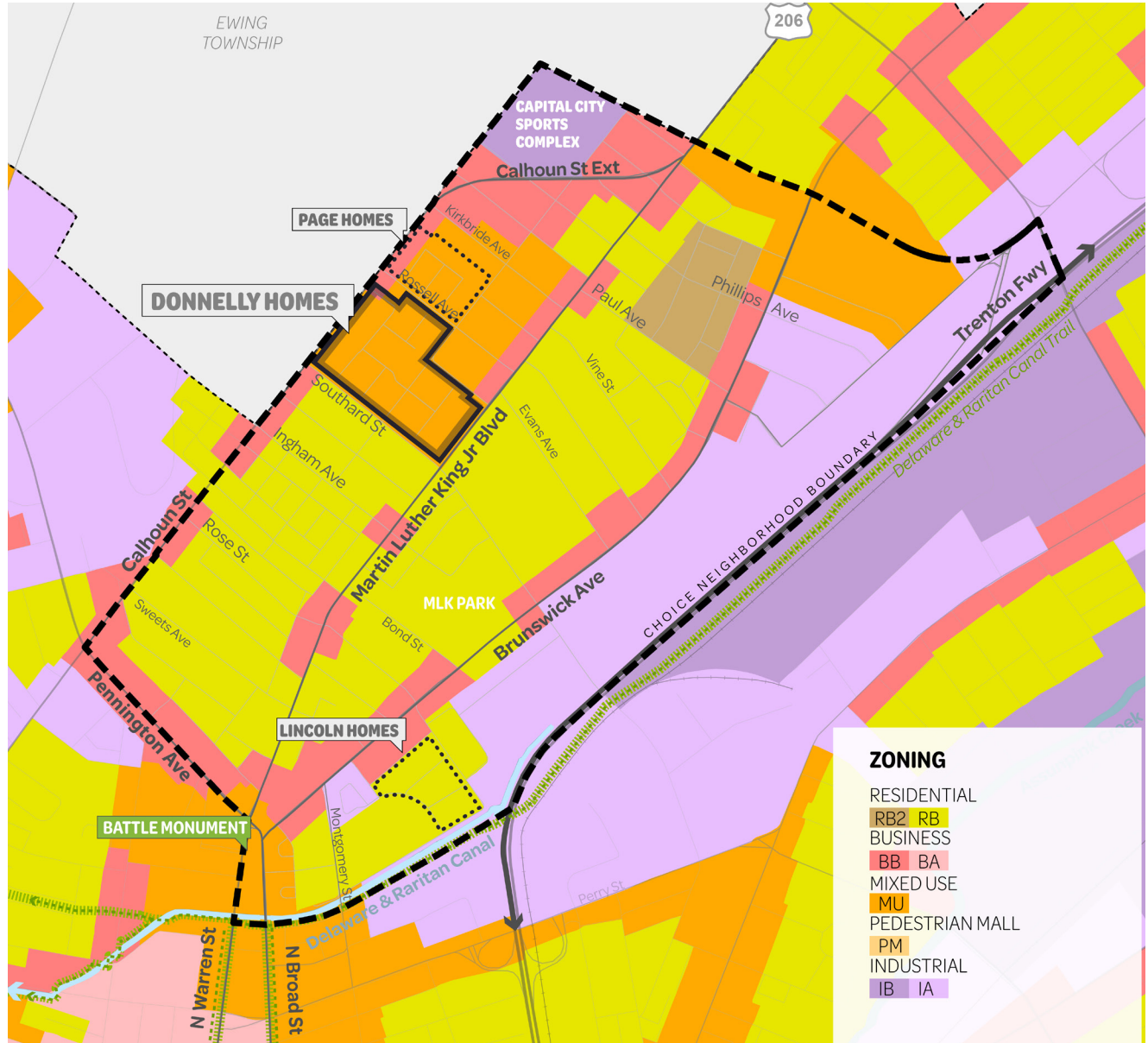
North Trenton / Battle Monument is a predominantly residential neighborhood with pockets of commercial, institutional, and industrial uses along the main corridors and at the edges of the neighborhood. However, none of the corridors have consistent, contiguous commercial land uses meaning that current retail does not benefit from the added attraction, visibility and stability associated with a better-defined commercial corridor. Additionally, there is a need to better delineate between industrial and non-industrial uses. For instance, Brunswick Avenue shifts character dramatically from residential to industrial when it crosses Southard Street, but this naturally-occurring land use shift is not reinforced by the zoning laws.

Trenton 250 took important steps towards creating a more cohesive and strategic vision, especially for Downtown Trenton, but for the North Ward, there remain a few inconsistencies and conflicting messages in the different regulatory and financial tools that help to guide and incentivize development—zoning, future land use, redevelopment areas, and other investment areas like opportunity zones, enterprise zones and foreign trade zones.



^ **FIGURE 6. EXISTING LAND USE**

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU- 2018 ACS (5-YEAR)



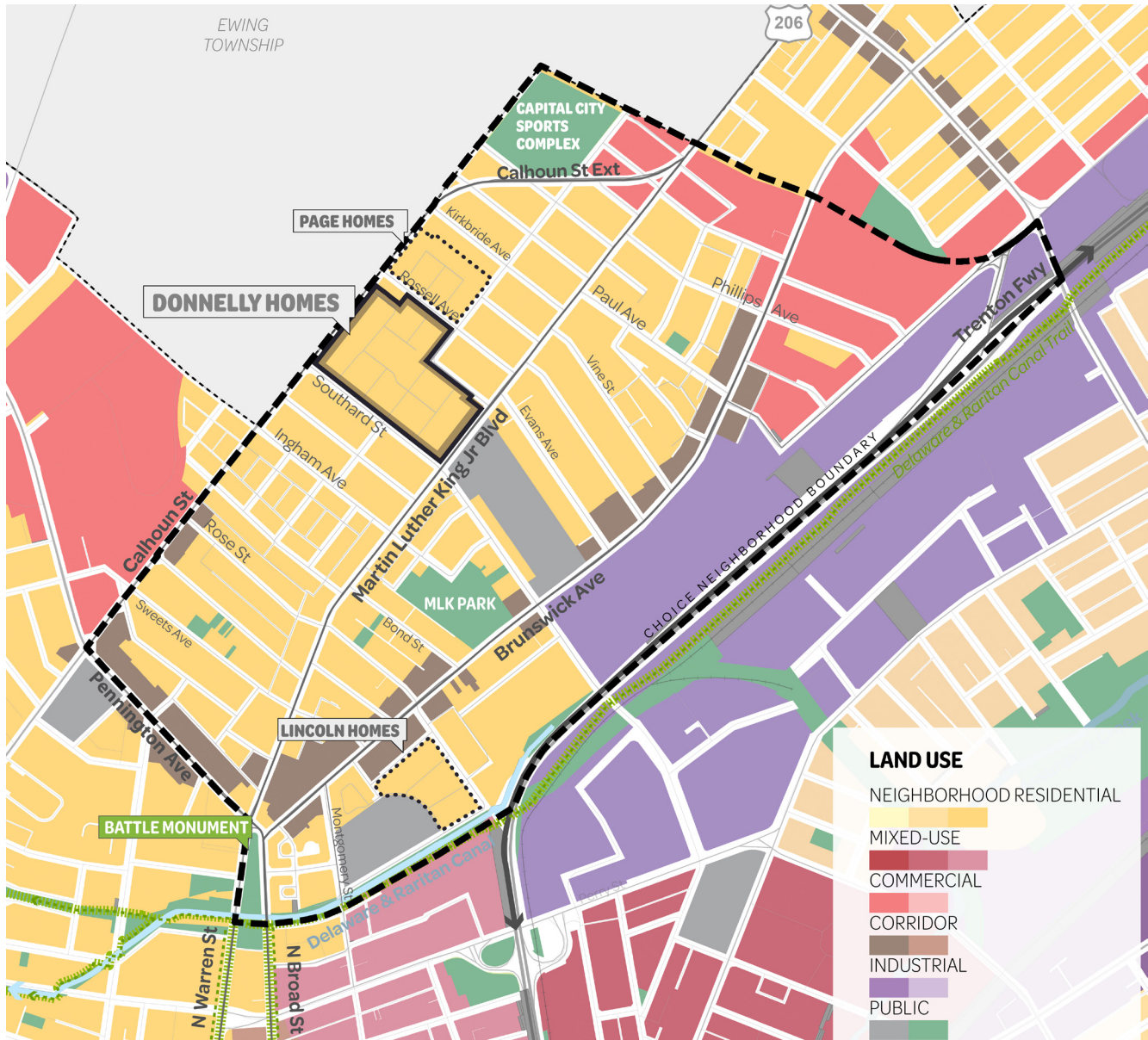
**FIGURE 7. EXISTING ZONING**

SOURCE: TRENTON 250

Trenton 250’s Future Land Use vision makes clear that the city expects this neighborhood to continue to primarily be a residential community with mixed-use areas along Pennington Avenue and Brunswick Avenue. However, the Future Land Use vision shows no mixed-use or corridor areas along MLK Boulevard, which seems like a missed opportunity because it already is such a natural candidate for a neighborhood-scale retail and amenities corridor. It is also striking that the area surrounding the

hospital in the north east is exclusively commercial, which has the risk of effectively cutting off or isolating the two residential neighborhoods from one another. The Future Land Use map reinforces the observation that Southard Street already serves as a natural boundary between industrial and non-industrial uses.

Trenton 250’s Zoning, however, does not reinforce Southard Street as a boundary for industrial

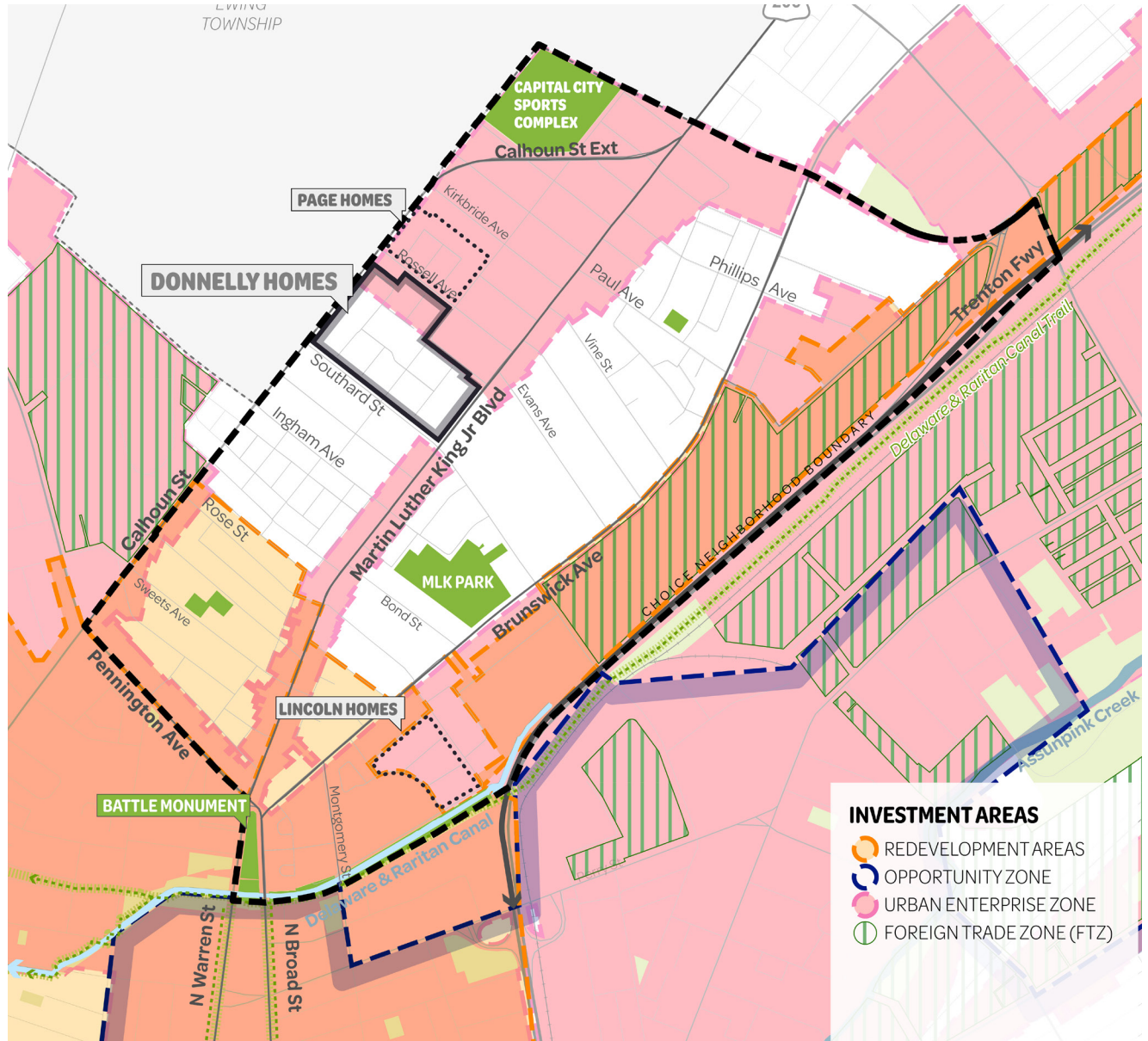


**FIGURE 8. FUTURE LAND USE**

SOURCE: TRENTON 250

land uses, allowing them to extend behind the residential and commercial uses lining Brunswick Avenue, and effectively cutting those residential areas off from accessing the Delaware and Raritan Canal trail more safely and directly from the intersection of Southard Street and Brunswick Ave. This is just one of several instances where the zoning does not seem in sync up with the intended land use. Most of Brunswick Avenue, Pennington Avenue, and Calhoun Street is zoned as

business and some sections of MLK Boulevard are zoned as business, but none of them are treated as a corridor with continuous mixed-use zoning. Donnelly Homes and the adjacent area is zoned as mixed use despite their predominantly residential character while obvious mixed-use corridors are kept to more restrictive residential or commercial zoning categories.



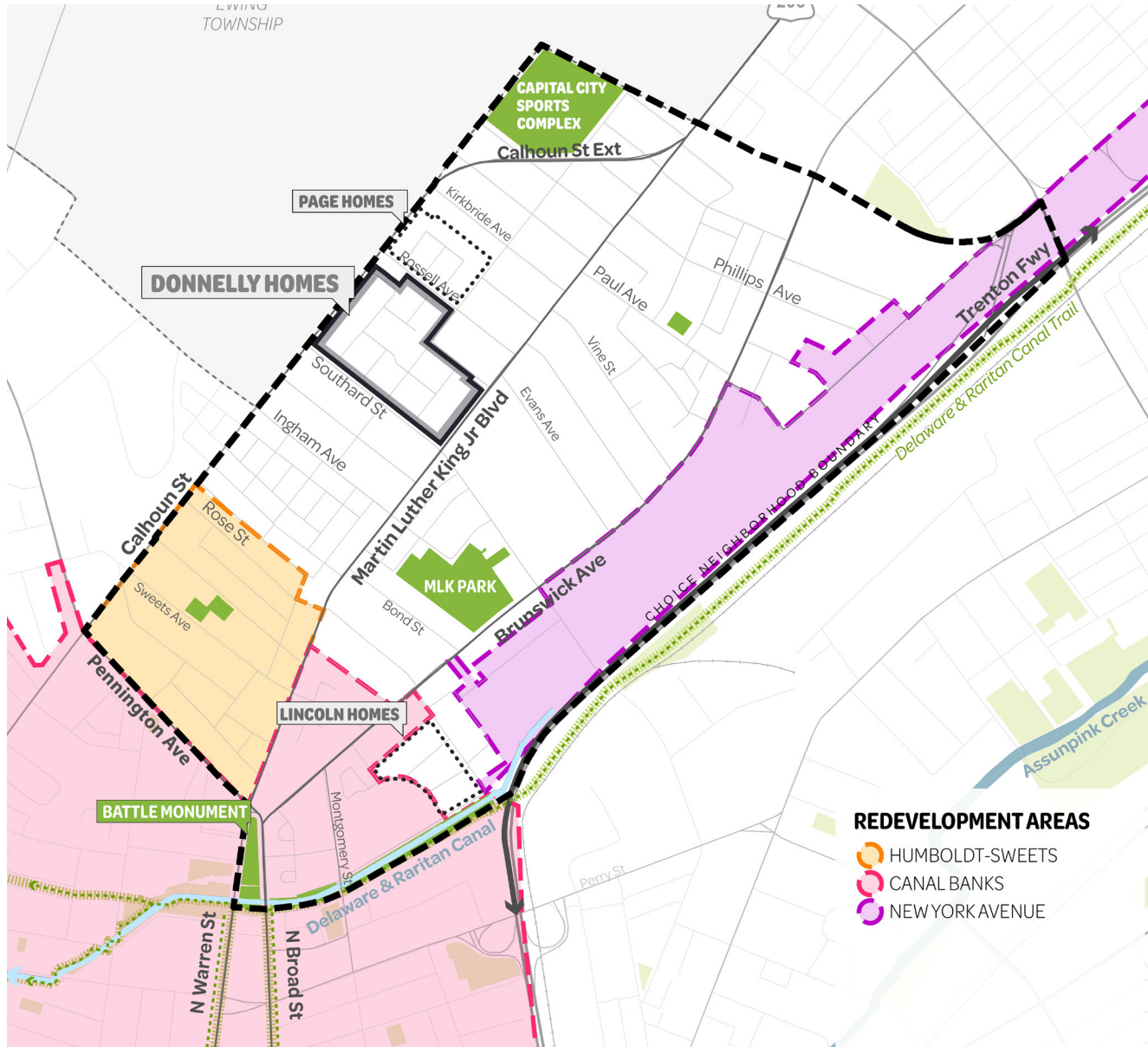
**FIGURE 9. INVESTMENT AREAS**

SOURCE: TRENTON 250, NJGIN

**INVESTMENT AREAS & REDEVELOPMENT AREAS**

The corridors and industrial areas of the Choice neighborhood are generally well-covered by specialized investment areas (such as Urban Enterprise Zones, Foreign Trade Zones and Redevelopment Areas), but most residential areas have very few if any tools to help incentivize economic development and investment.

► **Urban Enterprise Zones (UEZs):** New Jersey’s Urban Enterprise (UEZ) Program, enacted in 1983, is designed to encourage businesses to locate, invest, and grow in urban communities. This program is also designed to blend public and private investment to create new private sector jobs in urban communities. The specific benefits to businesses located in a NJ UEZ include: reduced sales tax, tax-free purchases on certain items (such as capital



^ **FIGURE 10. REDEVELOPMENT AREAS**

SOURCE: TRENTON 250, NJGIN

equipment, facility expansions, and upgrades), financial assistance from agencies such as NJEDA, tax credit options to reward new hiring or investments, and situation-dependent subsidies for unemployment insurance costs and exemptions from energy sales tax.<sup>1</sup> MLK is designated as a NJ Urban Enterprise Zone - how can we leverage this for greater impact to support this as a walkable neighborhood commercial corridor?

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nj.gov/dca/affiliates/uez/>;

- **Foreign Trade Zones (FTZs):** U.S. Foreign Trade Zones are secure geographical areas located in or near U.S. ports that provide reduced customs duties and taxes on international imports to businesses operating in that area. This national designation treats activities within FTZs as if they are outside national borders and is designed to encourage U.S. trade and value-added production activity by helping U.S. companies compete with the pricing of

foreign alternatives.<sup>2</sup> The historic industrial canal and rail corridors along the southern border of the neighborhood are still recognized as sites of industrial and foreign trade activity - how can this be leveraged to attract more jobs to the area that require less education and provide family-supporting wages? What sort of industries require Foreign Trade Zone designation and how can customized recruitment materials be developed to attract those industries?

With so many overlapping investment agendas, there is a need for Trenton’s redevelopment plans to help integrate and align investment to leverage all these tools towards a holistic outcome. Three Redevelopment Areas touch the Choice Neighborhood—New York Avenue, Humboldt-Sweets, and Canal Banks—and each has a different emphasis or agenda and is at a different stage of implementation and updating.

- ▶ **Canal Banks (#33)** - This is a priority plan for updating, has shown some progress, and is consistent with Trenton250. It calls for a linear park and open space network, housing, and mixed use on East State Street, the Magic Marker site, and in the downtown district.
- ▶ **Humboldt-Sweets (#29)** - This plan is NOT a priority plan for updating, is partially complete, and is consistent with Trenton250. It calls for new single family and multifamily housing, rehab of buildings for housing, getting rid of non-conforming uses, upgrading streetscapes, and redeveloping the former Water Works facility with housing and/or commercial.
- ▶ **New York Ave (#20)** – This is a priority plan for updating, has shown little progress, and is consistent with Trenton250. It calls for redevelopment of vacant properties for light

industrial/office or entertainment recreational or commercial uses as well as redevelopment of small portions of the area as housing to blend with surrounding neighborhoods.

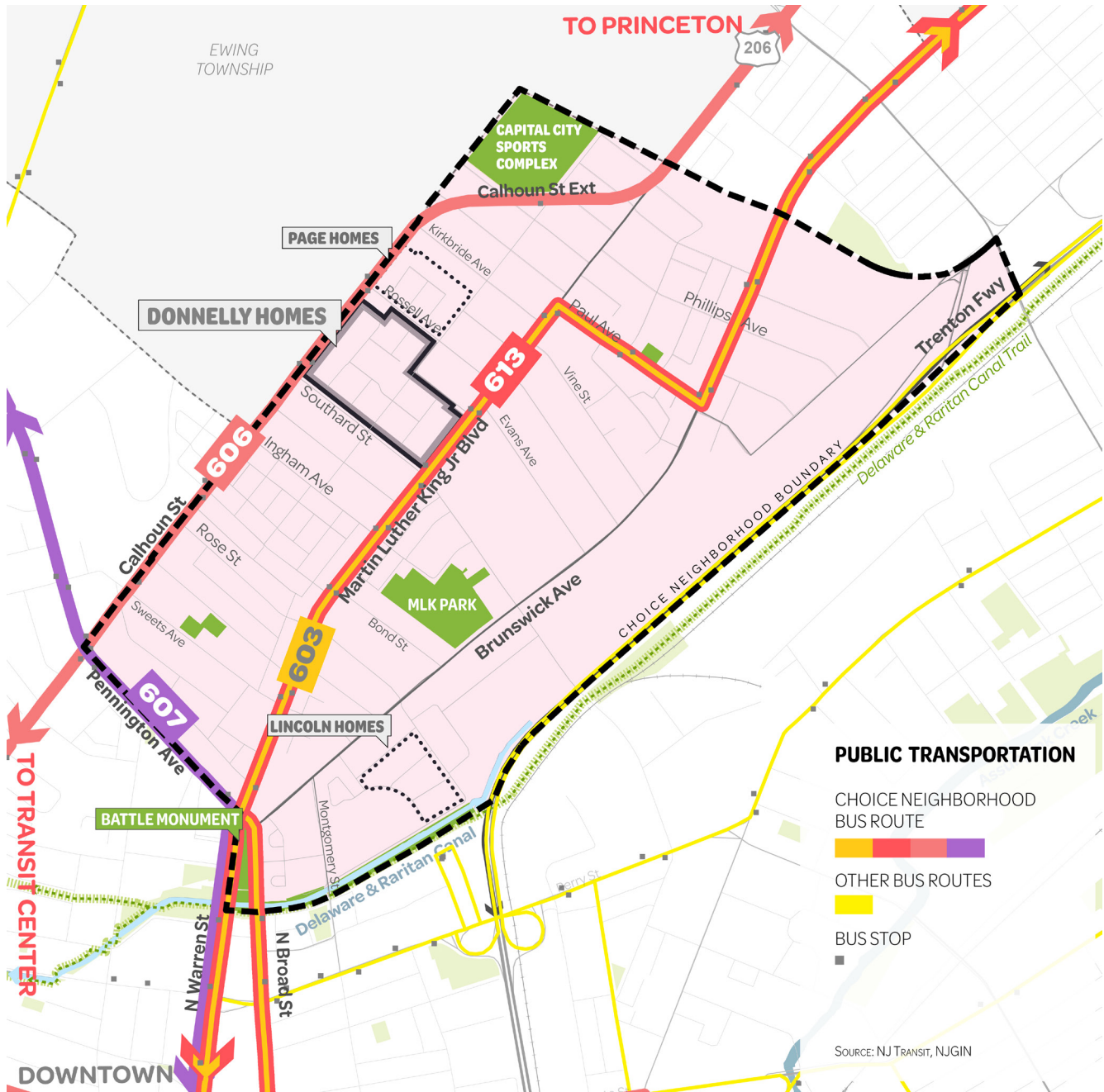
As part of the Trenton250 and ongoing Land Development Ordinance Update, the City is reviewing the effectiveness of the existing Redevelopment Areas to eliminate, combine, and simplify them to the extent possible with the goal of strengthening their capacity to stimulate investment and redevelopment. This Choice neighborhood planning process will consider selective expansion of one of the Redevelopment Areas or creation of a new redevelopment area to cover a majority of the Choice neighborhood and will seek to better align the Redevelopment Area boundaries with the Trenton250 Vision Areas and accompanying Zoning and Future Land Use regulations so that they all work together to support a common goal.

## **GETTING AROUND— TRANSPORTATION, STREETS AND THE PUBLIC REALM**

### **CURRENT STRUCTURE OF THE STREET NETWORK**

The most prominent gateways into the North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood are the four crossings of the Delaware and Raritan Canal and the Trenton Freeway (U.S. Route 1) that runs alongside it—Warren and Broad streets are a one-way pair sandwiching Battle Monument whereas Montgomery Street, Southard Street, and Olden Avenue are each two-way streets. The Oak Street Corridor project proposed as part of Trenton 250 would extend Paul Avenue across Brunswick Avenue to cross New York Avenue and the Trenton Freeway making another interchange with the Freeway, and a fifth gateway into the neighborhood from the south, helping to break up the isolating effect of the long industrial super-block that

<sup>2</sup> <https://enforcement.trade.gov/ftzpage/info/zone.html>; <https://www.panynj.gov/port/en/doing-business/foreign-trade-zone-49.html>



^ **FIGURE 11. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

SOURCE: TRENTON 250, NJGIN

separates the North Ward from Downtown and the East Ward just south of the Canal.

Coming from the west and north, the major potential gateways into the neighborhood are at the intersection of Pennington Avenue and Calhoun Street, where Ingham Avenue crosses from Ewing Township to the City of Trenton at Calhoun Street, and where Princeton Avenue splits to form MLK Boulevard and Calhoun Street at the gateway to the neighborhood from the Top Road neighborhood to the north. Many of these locations offer opportunities for placemaking, art, and signage to define and distinguish the neighborhood.

Within the Choice neighborhood, the major roads that define and connect the neighborhood are the early main roads—Calhoun Street, Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard, Brunswick Avenue and Pennington Avenue – with Southard Street serving as an important connecting cross-street at the center of the neighborhood, where many of the public institutions and amenities are clustered.

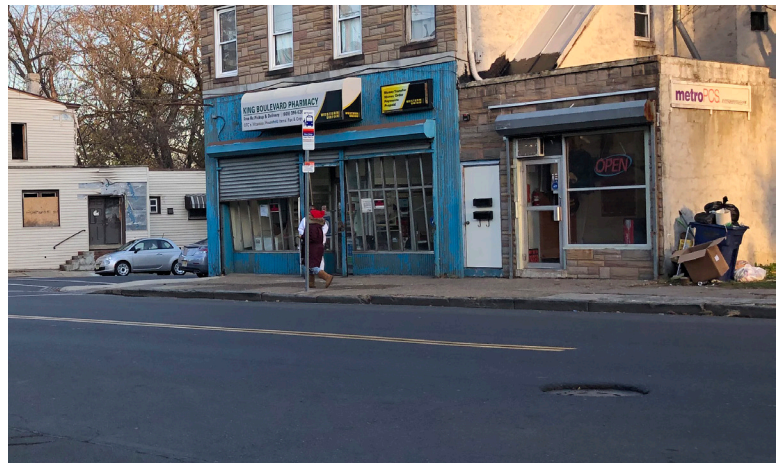
**CURRENT MULTI-MODAL USE OF THE STREET NETWORK**

Four bus routes serve the neighborhood (603, 606, 607, and 613), and three of those four run past Donnelly Homes (603, 606, 613), with most residents within a 5-minute walk of a bus stop. However, the existing bus routes do not serve desirable common suburban shopping and work destinations for residents, meaning that they have limited utility despite the convenience and proximity within the neighborhood. It is also noteworthy that there is no bus route along Brunswick Avenue between Pennington and Paul Avenue, despite the fact that a major park and new school sit along this stretch of road and Trenton 250 identifies this stretch as a main commercial corridor. The insufficient bus waiting environments, poor lighting and lack of safety of the streets also make the current bus service less valuable than it could be.

While the neighborhood has the bones to be an incredibly walkable neighborhood because of its pedestrian-scaled streets and extensive network of sidewalks and marked crosswalks along all the main roads, the condition, cleanliness, poor lighting and safety of the network is a different story. Residents repeatedly indicated that they do not feel safe as a pedestrian because of the way that drivers speed through the area and because of the lack of adequate signage, lighting and traffic calming. Additionally, the general sense that it is not safe to be outside in the neighborhood – day or night – because of gun violence severely limits residents’ ability to take advantage of the opportunity to walk around the neighborhood, whether for errands or exercise, to get to school or work.

The bike network is virtually non-existent currently and the presence of trash and debris on the streets makes it particularly hazardous for local residents to use a bicycle to get around the neighborhood, even if they do feel confident and courageous enough to share road space with speeding cars.

In light of the poor quality and lack of basic safety and comfort measures for transit-users, pedestrians and cyclists, it should come as no surprise that the vast majority of residents travel by car alone or in a carpool to get to and from work. Notable departures from this overall pattern include: (1) the area between Pennington Avenue, Calhoun Street and MLK Boulevard, which has many people commuting by bus, (2) the area near the Capital City Sports Complex, which has a larger number of bike commuters, and (3) the area between MLK Boulevard and Brunswick Avenue between Bond Street and Paul Avenue, which has many people riding in taxis (note: the ACS does not include carshares as an option, they may be included under carpool, other, or potentially taxi).



## SIDEWALKS AND CROSSINGS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

### COMPLETE STREETS, TRAFFIC SAFETY & THE QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC REALM

Residents have consistently noted that while the neighborhood has good bones, the design and use of the neighborhood's streets makes them an unsafe environment for anyone who is not in a car, and particularly for school-age children walking to their neighborhood schools. The vehicular accident hot spot mapping from the Trenton Police confirms this. Overall, vehicular accidents are highest at the edges of our neighborhood, which may isolate Choice Neighborhood residents within their own neighborhood – for instance, Olden Ave

is a key connection to the south, but high accident rates indicate it is not a safe connection and the Pennington and Calhoun intersection stands out as an unsafe gateway to Downtown and the Waterfront.

Additionally, vehicular accident hot-spots around MLK Park and School are particularly concerning, and based on conversations with residents and stakeholders, it seems likely that this accident hot-spot is related to the high volume of school drop-off traffic and the lack of adequate design or management of that process, which leads to a chaotic and unsafe situation for students, parents

and passers-by alike. The relatively higher accident rates along Southard Street between Donnelly Homes and the MLK Elementary School site are also particularly concerning because this is the route Donnelly Homes children are most likely to take to get to their school. Overall, there is a great and urgent need to focus on how to create safe walking routes to the local neighborhood schools so that parents don't feel the need to drive their kids to school just to keep them safe.

Moving forward, the design and implementation of "complete streets"—streets designed for safe use by all users—should be part of the response to unsafe road conditions for people traveling by foot, bike or bus in the neighborhood. Trenton 250 does include a proposed "complete street" network, but that network is fragmented in the North Trenton/ Battle Monument neighborhood and needs further clarification and prioritization. Calhoun Street, Pennington Avenue, and Paul Avenue are "proposed" complete streets, whereas the two main north/south corridors of the neighborhood (MLK Boulevard and Brunswick Avenue) are listed as "potential" complete streets.

The "proposed" complete streets in the neighborhood also have or will have shared lanes with bicyclists. The East Coast Greenway (a 3,000 mile trail connecting 15 states from Maine to Florida), runs both through, and along the edge of the neighborhood, but it is unclear how the design of the street segments designated as part of the East Coast Greenway differ from other non-greenway segments. Overall, the Choice Neighborhood planning process offers an opportunity to close gaps in the proposed network and support a wider variety of street designs that make a more diverse user group able to take advantage of and enjoy the streets of North Trenton. Safe Routes to School offers a potential framework to help prioritize where street safety improvements should happen first to begin the

process of making a safe and comfortable network of streets designed for all users and not only for drivers.

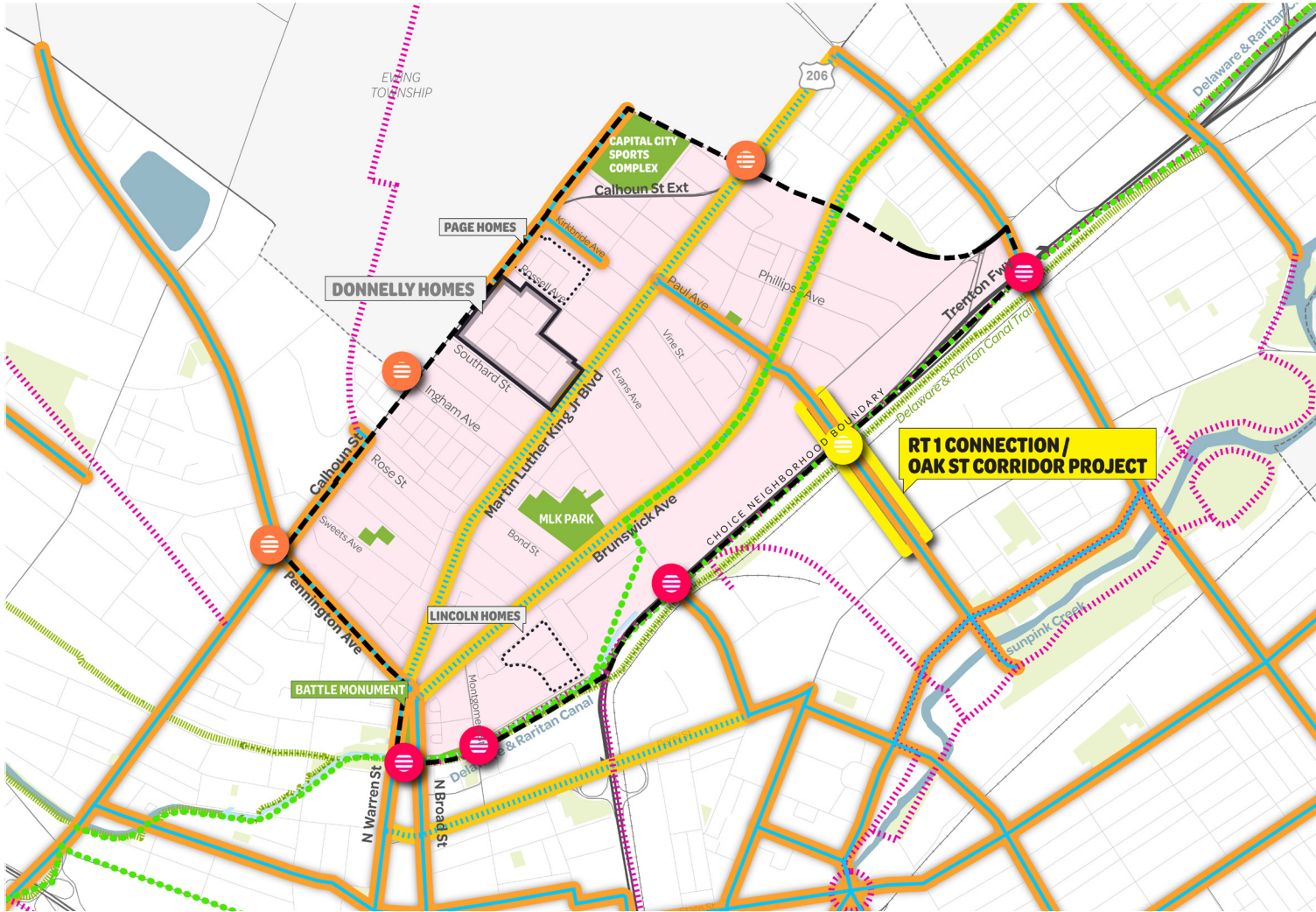
## **PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

### **PUBLIC SAFETY**

Public Safety is perhaps the most pressing and central issue that this plan must address in order to pave the way for the North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood to become a more healthy, vibrant and opportunity-rich community. There are many layers and histories that have contributed to the current distrust between community and police and to the prevalence of gun violence, which we will touch upon here, but the most important takeaway is that, in order for this plan to succeed, it must include strategies that meaningfully address and help to reverse the persistent sense of fear, desperation and hopelessness created by the current conditions.

At the core of the public safety challenges of the neighborhood is the legacy of gang violence that emerged during desperate times when the neighborhood and the city were coping with the corrosive effects of de-industrialization and white flight. Trenton today continues to have an intense territorial identity and familial rivalries and grudges that are a holdover from gangs that were dismantled (gang leaders were arrested but gang members remained). There is a need for healing, reconciliation and conflict management, especially for youth who may have lost a family member or friend to gang violence.

On top of the underlying territorialism and grudges that motivate much of the violence, residents have lost their trust in the police for a variety of reasons, which has further eroded an already weakened system of enforcement. Under-resourcing and coordination issues between THA security and City of Trenton police have led to major breakdowns



^ **FIGURE 12. KEY GATEWAYS + CONNECTIONS**

SOURCE: TRENTON 250, NJGIN

**Safe Routes to School is a national initiative that aims to make it safe, convenient and fun for children to walk and bicycle to and from schools. The program operates in all 50 states to secure funding and support for policies that encourage spending on safe routes to school. There are many benefits for children including increased safety, health, exercise, sense of self-esteem, and socialization.**

**TRENTON 250**

- PROPOSED RIVER/HWY CROSSING
- RIVER/HIGHWAY CROSSING
- OTHER GATEWAY OPPORTUNITIES
- PROPOSED COMPLETE STREET
- POTENTIAL COMPLETE STREET
- BIKE SHARED LANE
- EAST COAST GREENWAY
- PROPOSED MULTI-USE PATH
- POTENTIAL BIKE SHARED LANE

SOURCE: TRENTON 250

in police response at Donnelly Homes that have undermined trust in police and have led Donnelly Homes residents to feel abandoned by both police forces. More broadly, there is a lack of trust, accountability, and consistency in the relationship between the community and the police and a sense that people can get away with many crimes because of the inconsistency of enforcement. Peer pressure and fear of retribution also discourages residents from reporting disruptive behavior and violence to the police.

Residents share a relatively uniform sense that the whole neighborhood is not safe, and that Donnelly Homes in particular is not safe. Data collected from the Trenton Police reveal some patterns—although these patterns may not tell the whole story as many incidents may never get reported formally because of residents fearing retribution from their peers. We will go through “heatmaps” of the City of Trenton Police records showing how different crimes and other key statistics for the North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood compare against those same crimes and key statistics elsewhere in the city. For all of these maps, red represents a comparatively “high” rate of the factor being mapped whereas orange is a “medium-high” rate, yellow is a “medium” rate and blank or white is a “low” rate.

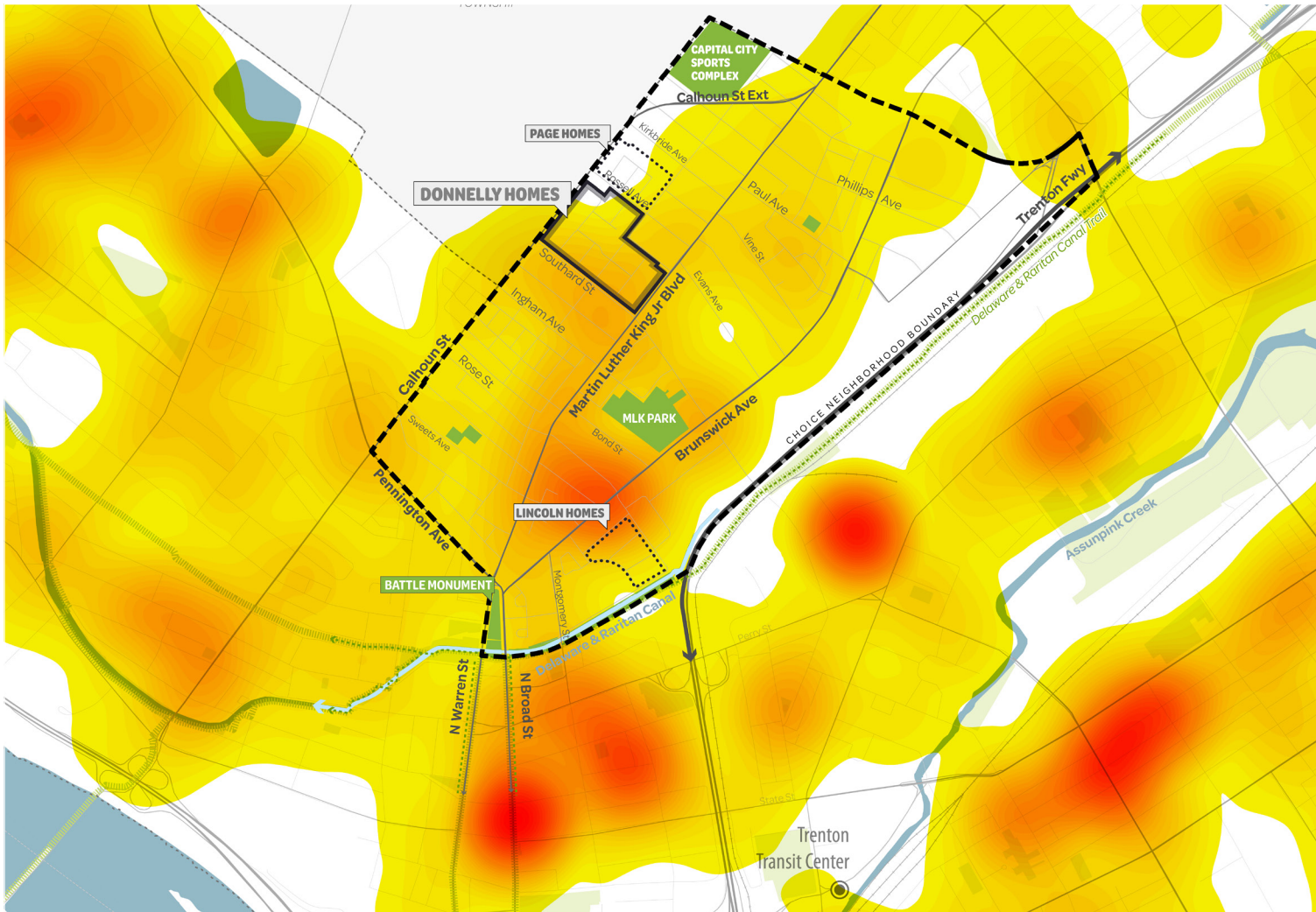
- **Call-For-Service:** The major call-for-service areas are just outside Donnelly Homes and Lincoln Homes along MLK Blvd and around MLK Park.
- **Arrests:** The arrests rate north of Lincoln Homes is the highest within the neighborhood. Otherwise, arrests cluster along MLK Blvd and MLK Park.
- **Firearm Discharges:** This type of crime distributes evenly within the neighborhood and generally is lower than other citywide hot-spots. The area between Donnelly Homes and MLK Park has relatively higher rate.

- **Violent (Part 1) Crimes:** Violent crimes are relatively evenly distributed within the neighborhood. However, near Donnelly Homes along MLK Blvd and surrounding Rossi Park are relatively higher. MLK Blvd + MLK Park both have the potential to be neighborhood gathering places, but safety MUST be addressed first.

Finally, on top of the territorial tensions, grudges and strained community-police relationship, residents also feel less safe in the neighborhood because of poor lighting (especially along MLK Boulevard, Southard and Calhoun streets) and vacant buildings and lots, which make residents feel unsafe due to the poor visibility and tendency to attract unwanted or unlawful behavior. The traffic safety issues mentioned in the previous section also undermine “eyes on the street” by reducing the number of people walking, biking and waiting for buses in the neighborhood. As a result, it is easier for individuals to get away with bad behavior because none of their neighbors or peers are “watching” them and creating that sense of peer pressure to do the right thing. Parents’ fear that the trip to and from school and after-school programs and activities is unsafe—both from a traffic and from a violence perspective—also means that youth are more isolated, bored and lack access to mentorship, learning and recreational opportunities because their safety is at risk every time they leave their home.

## CONTEXTUALIZING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

It is difficult to fully understand the health and wellbeing of residents in the Choice neighborhood without looking at it through the lenses of public safety, environmental justice, and social determinants of health. Many residents of Donnelly Homes, and of the North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood more generally, are working to overcome multi-generational trauma, economic instability and homelessness, poor education, food insecurity, and chronic disease.



^ **FIGURE 13. OCCURRENCE OF ARRESTS IN THE CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD**

SOURCE: TRENTON NEW JERSEY

Low High

These intersecting issues all, in one way or another, hinder residents' ability to reach their full potential and make them more susceptible to mental health crises that often are dealt with through the Police rather than through healthcare providers and social workers. Many of these challenges are not specific to North Trenton, but are in fact patterns of hardship and poor health outcomes that are common throughout the City of Trenton, as documented in the Trenton Health Team's 2019 Trenton Community Health Needs and Assets Assessment (2019 Trenton CHNA Report).

The 2019 Trenton CHNA Report highlighted eight priority health concerns, all of which appear to be

consistent with the experiences and challenges Choice neighborhood residents are facing in their lives:

- Housing quality and cost,
- Racial/ethnic Inequities,
- Adverse childhood experiences,
- Mental health and substance use disorders,
- Community safety,
- Food insecurity, access and nutrition,
- Chronic disease, and
- Maternal and child health.

These health concerns are somewhat reflective of larger structural inequalities at the regional scale, that are magnified at the Choice Neighborhood scale. For instance, the City of Trenton has a 28.4 percent poverty rate and is a majority-minority city in a majority-white county but that segregation and concentrated poverty is further magnified in the Choice neighborhood where there is a 40 percent poverty rate.

**HOUSING INSTABILITY, TRAUMA AND MENTAL HEALTH**

The condition and comparatively high cost of housing combined with pervasive stress of environmental influences contribute to widespread housing instability and unhealthy home environments for many residents. The 2019 Trenton CHNA Report, in particular, highlighted high rates of childhood lead poisoning and asthma along with a 10.8 percent rate of asthma among adults—conditions that are generally associated with poorly maintained housing conditions (peeling lead paint, contaminated soil, and un-addressed mold). These housing and environmental factors are compounded by broader issues around public safety, trauma, mental health and substance abuse, and lack of economic opportunity which all make housing instability an even more common stressor for Trenton residents.

Of respondents for the 2019 Trenton CHNA Report, many had a history of childhood trauma, 22.5 percent do not feel safe in their neighborhoods, and 28.5 percent indicated that housing instability and cost negatively affect their health. These issues around personal trauma, poor housing quality, and inability to afford adequate housing converge to make homelessness incredibly common in Trenton – 75 percent of the county’s homeless individuals live in Trenton, and of those individuals experiencing homelessness, 54 percent struggle with mental health and 45.4 percent are combating a substance use disorder. Addressing housing

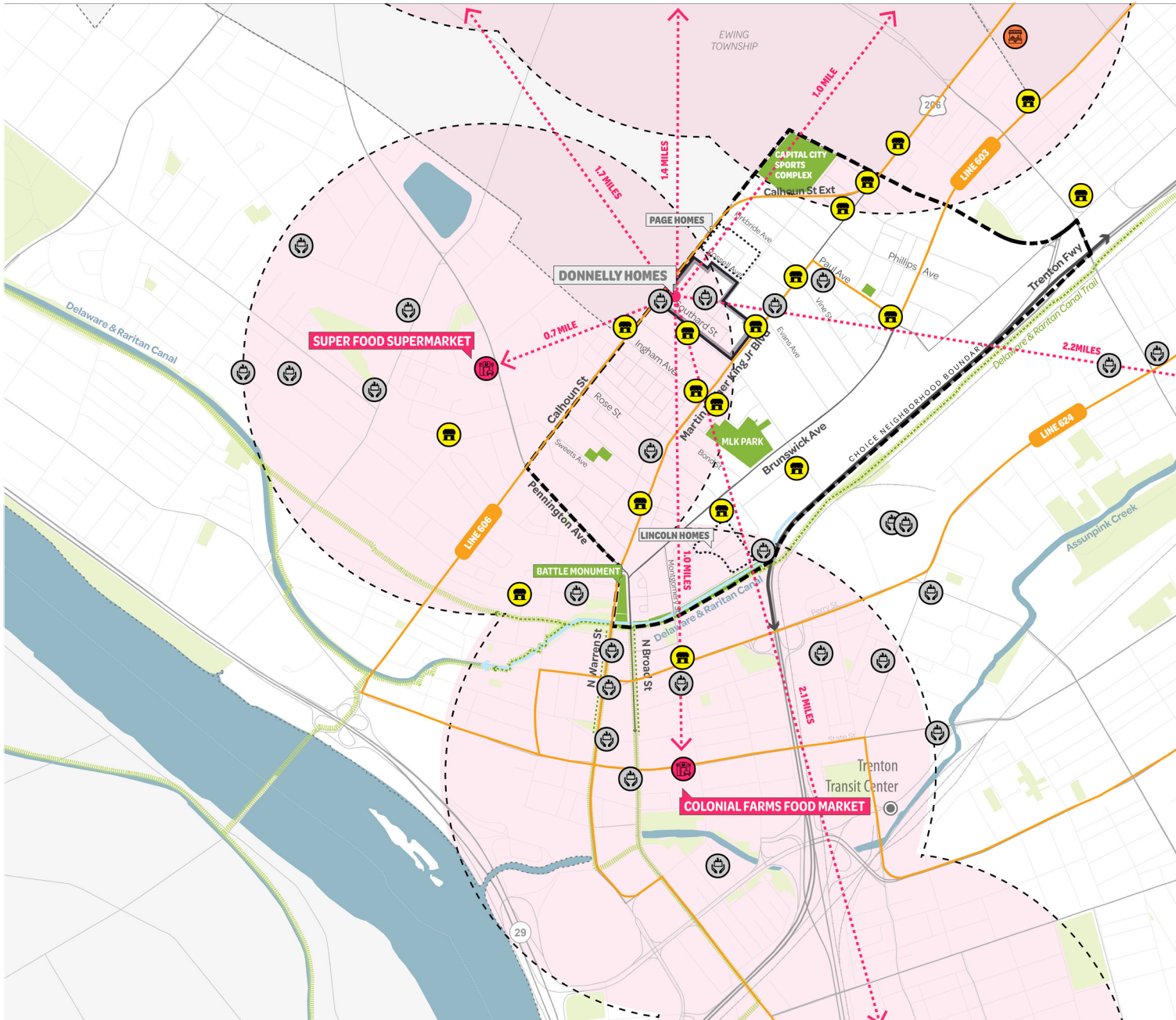
quality, health, and cost alongside trauma and mental health is therefore critical to the overall stability and health outcomes for residents.

**COMBATING CHRONIC DISEASE THROUGH ACTIVE LIFESTYLES, FOOD + NUTRITION**







Trenton residents also suffer from higher rates of chronic disease than the county, state and nation. For residents of Donnelly Homes, many of the top health conditions identified through the Needs Assessment reflect living conditions in the neighborhood. Top issues are 1 – high blood pressure, 2 – Arthritis, 3 - Asthma/breathing issues, 4 – Depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress, and 5 – Diabetes.

While many factors influence the rates of chronic disease in any community, two factors are intimately related to the physical environment— access to fresh, affordable and nutritious food and access to exercise and recreation amenities that support an active lifestyle. The City of Trenton is considered a food desert and while the Choice neighborhood has better access than some areas of the city, it is not well served by providers of healthy and nutritious food within walking distance for most residents. [Insert food access map from slide 47 of Core Team presentation]

Except Supremo Foods on Pennington Avenue, all other grocery stores are beyond a 1/2-mile walking distance from Donnelly Homes. Furthermore, existing bus service does not reach any full-service grocery stores, making it difficult for residents to get to stores that would enable them to buy fresh, affordable and nutritious food regularly as part of their daily routines and commutes to work. While MLK Boulevard has several corner stores, convenience stores and bodegas, these smaller shops tend not to sell fresh and nutritious food. Moving forward, there is a potential for these small shops along MLK Boulevard to become “Healthy Corner Stores”—the Healthy Corner Store Initiative



^ **FIGURE 14. FRESH FOOD ACCESS**

-  Grocery Store/Supermarket
-  Farmers' Market
-  Corner Store / Convenience Store / Bodega
-  Food Bank / COVID-19 Food Distribution
-  0.5-mile Grocery Store/Supermarket Buffer
-  Bus Route

is a model that teaches corner store managers how to source, stock, display and promote fresh food within their stores. This could also be paired with healthy cooking and nutrition programs at local institutions like the schools, community centers and health centers, which could help to close the current gap in skills to prepare healthy dishes at home using fresh and nutritious ingredients.

Lastly, improving public safety and continuing to invest in improvements to the pedestrian and bike network, and parks and trails will make it easier for residents to enjoy an active lifestyle in their neighborhood. Even basic improvements like better lighting, street cleaning, safer crosswalks and sidewalk repair would make a big difference in residents' ability to enjoy a daily walk around the neighborhood.

**ACCESS TO CARE & MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH**

The 2019 Trenton CHNA Report found that 16 percent or more of Trenton residents lack health insurance. Based on the Needs Assessment survey, this number is better for Donnelly Homes residents, where approximately 90 percent of adults and 91 percent of children have health insurance. Fortunately for Donnelly and Choice neighborhood residents, the Capital Health Regional Medical Center and Henry J. Austin Health Center are just a few blocks away. This may explain the high number of survey respondents who have an annual well visit (90%) and at least one dental cleaning within a typical year (84%). Residents did note, however, that access to more specialized services such as mental health, physical therapy, ob-gyn services, and domestic violence services are not readily available. Contributing to this is a significant lack of awareness of existing local health facilities.

At the city level, Trenton had six times more teen births than the State of New Jersey and many residents never had an initial prenatal appointment. Poor access to family planning, maternal and child health support is not just about where individuals live in New Jersey. Throughout New Jersey, Black mothers are twice as likely to die in pregnancy,

delivery, or postpartum as any other race or ethnicity. The Choice Neighborhood has better physical access to care than many neighborhoods in Trenton, but bureaucratic, logistical and financial barriers are such that many residents often are not able to make full use of local health care providers. Residents need support navigating the complexities of healthcare and insurance systems in order to access the preventative care they need. Community anchors like THA, the schools, community centers and faith-based organizations all have a critical role to play in connecting residents to the supportive resources that will enable them to receive the care they need.

**ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, RACIAL INEQUITY & SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH**

Finally, it is important to specifically acknowledge the role of pervasive discrimination and racism in causing disparities in health outcomes for residents of New Jersey, Mercer County and Trenton in particular. The 2019 Trenton CHNA Report found that there were racial disparities in chronic disease, maternal health, and cancer, as well as racial disparities in health outcomes for individuals with the same health condition. Additionally, 25% of respondents to that survey indicated that discrimination and racism had a major impact on their health and wellbeing.

It goes without saying that race and ethnicity should never determine health outcomes, but it is very clear that for residents of Trenton, and nationwide, race and ethnicity does determine health outcomes. This plan alone cannot and will not reverse or systematically addressing these racial and ethnic health disparities – that work is much larger in scale than this neighborhood alone – but this plan can begin to change some of the environmental factors (like housing, food access, access to recreation and open space amenities, public safety and access to healthcare) as well as strategically enhancing the supportive services in the neighborhood so that residents have a stronger foundation from which to pursue health and wellness in their everyday lives.



## **THE STATE OF HOUSING IN NORTH TRENTON**

### **HOUSING OVERVIEW & TYPE MIX**

The North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood contains an eclectic mix of housing stock – a result of waves of population growth over an extended history. In 2019, the neighborhood contained 2,708 housing units. Approximately a quarter of the housing units in the neighborhood are owner occupied. 56% of all housing units are rental while the remaining 19% are vacant structures. The block group that contains Donnelly Homes and Page Homes has an unsurprisingly high rental rate of 92%. The rental rate of surrounding block groups in the neighborhood are more stable, ranging from 50-60%. The block groups sandwiching Donnelly Homes contain some of the most stable owner-occupied units in Trenton. Adjacent Ewing Township boasts an extraordinary low rental rate. Apart from Trenton Housing Authority sites, most of the housing stock in the neighborhood are attached single family homes.

### **VACANCY & BLIGHT**

Housing vacancy and associated blight are the biggest deterrents to private investments in the North Trenton Choice Neighborhood. There is a significant cluster of vacant buildings and lots between Calhoun St, Pennington Ave and MLK Blvd. Another swath of vacant buildings and lots exists between MLK Blvd and Brunswick Ave. Vacancy and blight is more prominent west of Donnelly than east of the site. There are a few large vacant industrial lots along the D&R Canal. The most prominent vacant building (and most promising adaptive reuse opportunity) in the neighborhood is the former Junior No. 1 school across MLK Boulevard from Donnelly Homes.

### **NEED FOR HEALTHY HOMES**

There is a general need city-wide in Trenton for healthier homes. Based on a community health needs assessment conducted by the Trenton Health Team in 2019, over 90% of all homes in Trenton were constructed before 1978 when lead-based paint was prohibited. Many homes in Trenton, including structures in North Trenton, are highly likely to contain lead-based paint, which can cause lead poisoning in children. It is estimated that more than 50% of Trenton school children have a level of lead in their blood that affects their learning and behavior<sup>3</sup>.

Asthma affects Trentonians in higher numbers than national/county averages. Poor housing conditions with dust and mold are triggers for asthma-related incidences. Pediatric asthma is of high concern, particularly as it affects Black children at twice the rate of other children<sup>3</sup>.

### **EXISTING THA & LIHTC AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

Donnelly Homes as the target housing site consists of 21 barrack-style residential buildings on a 13 acre site in the heart of North Trenton. Originally constructed in 1939, Donnelly Homes is one of the oldest public housing complexes in the City of Trenton, which at the time was for Whites only. While Trenton Housing Authority continues to expend capital improvement dollars into Donnelly Homes, the complex exhibits fundamental design deficiencies of a nature that would require substantial reconstruction to fully address – most notably disproportionate density, inadequate room sizes, no street presence, lack of accessible routes/units, and structurally deficient. The site layout, which sits amid a public housing “superblock,” disrupts the neighborhood grid that has governed this historic capital city. Additionally, N. Willow Street is intentionally closed off on-site for security purposes, cutting off the one and only opportunity for neighborhood connectivity.

<sup>3</sup> Trenton Community Health Needs and Assets Assessment, Trenton Health Team, Inc., June 2019



^ **FIGURE 15. VACANCY**

SOURCE: TRENTON 250, NJGIN



### TURNER POINTE RIBBON CUTTING

These site layout features create a disconnect from the neighborhood fabric and a clear sense of isolation. Similarly, the barrack-style buildings are in sharp contrast to the single-family homes, twins and rowhomes that characterize the North Trenton/ Battle Monument neighborhood.

Turner Pointe is the former location of the George W. Page Home complex, a site that was built in 1954 and had been vacant for several years. Redevelopment included demolition of the old buildings and construction of the new apartments with modern amenities and energy-efficient appliances. The first half of the site was completed in October and the remaining half will be ready in December 2020, offering a total of 77 new affordable 77 townhome-style apartments. The site is now being leased, including a handful of qualified residents from Donnelly Homes across the street.

Lincoln Homes was built in 1940 and restored in 2004. Located at 207 Old Rose Street, Lincoln Homes is comprised of 118 apartments, in a combination of townhomes and three-story walk-ups offering one to three-bedroom units.

Additionally, there is one LIHTC property and one multi-family HUD assisted property within the neighborhood. Most of the subsidized housing in the area is south of the neighborhood, near downtown Trenton.

### SENIORS & AGING IN PLACE

The highest population of seniors in the neighborhood is in the central to northeast of the neighborhood from MLK Blvd to the highway – an important neighborhood demographic to keep engaged as the Choice Planning Team explores the potential of rehabilitating Junior One (vacant middle school) into new senior housing.



^ **FIGURE 16. DONNELLY HOMES**

### **SUPPORTIVE MARKET STUDIES (PAGE AND DOWNTOWN HOUSING STUDY)**

Based on a Downtown Trenton residential market study conducted in 2018, there currently exists 760 units of unmet market-rate demand. (Zimmerman/Volk Associates, Inc. 2018) The southern portion of the Donnelly Homes / North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood will benefit from this market demand in the near term due to its proximity to Downtown Trenton. One desired outcome of the proposed Choice plan is to pull this market potential northward into the neighborhood to benefit Donnelly Homes residents

who desire a more mixed-income community. The recent completion of adjacent Page Homes (Turner Pointe) provides market confidence that new LIHTC units can work in the neighborhood. The market study completed for that project states that there is minimal competition for LIHTC product in the neighborhood, and demographic scan indicates ample supply of “income-eligible” residents. Additionally, the market study confirms that there is a shortage of quality housing products in the target study area. To that end, a Market Study was commissioned by Zimmerman/Volk Associates to inform the Choice housing plan. Preliminary findings and recommendations follow.

**PRELIMINARY CHOICE RESIDENTIAL MARKET STUDY**

A preliminary analysis of the residential market potential of the North Trenton / Battle Monument Choice Neighborhood show a five year demand of 1,150 units of new housing – 724 rentals and 426 for sale units. Of the 724 new rental units, 197 units (27% of new rental demand) can be classified as market rate as defined by the CNI program. It is important to note that the remaining 527 rental units (73% of new rental demand) does not account for the induced demand as a result of the eventual redevelopment of Donnelly Homes. (376 replacement units). Based on ZVA’s initial work, a majority of the for-sale units will have to subsidized at various levels. Moving forward, the planning team will ground truth this analysis with task forces/local stakeholders (growth of state agencies; revamping of public school system, etc.) and apply them to a viable, phased housing strategy.

Who are the households that represent the potential market for new housing units within the North Trenton/Battle Monument Choice Neighborhood Study Area?

As determined by the target market analysis, then, the general market segments, by lifestage, that represent the potential market for new housing units in the Study Area include:

- ▶ Younger singles and childless couples—54.3 percent;
- ▶ Empty nesters and retirees—26.1 percent); and
- ▶ Traditional and non-traditional family households—19.6 percent

With a share of more than 54 percent, younger singles and couples are the largest market for new housing units in the Study Area. A significant percentage of these younger households hold lower paying service and retail jobs. Approximately 37.4 percent of the younger households have incomes below 30 percent AMI (less than \$22,850 for a one-person household to less than \$26,100 for a two person household); another 19.5 percent have incomes ranging between 30 and 60 percent AMI (between \$22,850 and \$45,700 to between \$26,100 and \$52,200); 14.7 percent earn between 60 and 80 percent of the AMI (between \$45,700 and \$54,950 to between \$52,200 and \$62,800); just 11.7 percent have incomes between 80 and

	<b>Below 30% AMI</b>	<b>30% to 60% AMI</b>	<b>60% to 80% AMI</b>	<b>80% to 100% AMI</b>	<b>Above 100% AMI</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>
<b>Multi-Family For-Rent:</b>	275	144	108	83	114	<b>724</b>
<b>Multi-Family For-Sale:</b>	32	18	14	11	21	<b>96</b>
<b>Single-Family Attached For-Sale:</b>	73	44	33	29	41	<b>220</b>
<b>Single-Family Detached For-Sale:</b>	28	22	15	14	31	<b>110</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>207</b>	<b>1,150</b>
<i>Percent:</i>	35.5%	19.8%	14.8%	11.9%	18.0%	100.0%

^ **FIGURE 17. FIVE YEAR MARKET POTENTIAL**



100 percent AMI (between \$54,950 and \$76,100 to \$62,800 and \$87,000); and the remaining 16.6 percent earn over 100 percent of the AMI (over \$76,100 to over \$87,000).

Empty nesters and retirees comprise the second largest share of the potential market for new housing in the Study Area, at just over 26 percent. Some of these older singles and couples are retired or have never worked, although many are still actively working in lower-paying service jobs. The older singles and couples are comparable in their income ranges to the younger singles and couples, although their distribution differs somewhat: 31 percent have incomes that fall below 30 percent AMI, 17.3 percent have incomes between 30 and 60 percent AMI, 14 percent between 60 and 80 percent AMI, 13.3 percent between 80 and 100 percent AMI, and 24.3 percent earn more than 100 percent of the AMI.

At 19.6 percent, the smallest group, the family-oriented households that represent the potential market for new mixed-income housing units in the Study Area, are a mix of smaller, compact families and non-traditional families. Some of these households are headed by single parents, with one to four children. Thirty-six percent have incomes below 30 percent AMI (less than approximately \$29,350 for a three-person household to less than \$35,250 for a five-person household); 24 percent have incomes ranging between 30 and 60 percent AMI (between \$29,350 and \$58,700 to between \$35,250 and \$70,500); 16 percent earn between 60 and 80 percent of the AMI (between approximately \$58,700 and \$70,650 to between \$70,500 and \$84,800); 10.7 percent have incomes between 80 and 100 percent AMI (between \$70,650 and \$97,900 to between \$84,800 and \$117,400); and the remaining 13.3 percent earn over 100 percent of the AMI (over \$97,900 to over \$117,400).

CASE STUDY



## JUMPSTART GERMANTOWN

Jumpstart Germantown is a community development program spearheaded by Philly Office Retail that seeks to revitalize the Germantown neighborhoods and surrounding communities, including those in the 9th District. It was started with the goals of reducing blight and increasing local investment in the community. The program achieves success through training, mentoring, networking, and providing financial resources to local small-scale developers. Jumpstart uses a collaborative approach to real estate development, emphasizing the sharing of resources and information. Both experienced and aspiring developers are welcome.



To learn more, go to [www.jumpstartgermantown.com](http://www.jumpstartgermantown.com)

### CURRENT INITIATIVES:

- Training Program:** This program consists of four sessions that introduce new developers to the basics of real estate—financing, design, construction, leasing, and selling. Upon graduation, participants are paired with an experienced mentor.
- Developer’s Network:** Through networking events and social media, developers, leaders, and neighborhood stakeholders connect, communicate, and learn from each other.
- Loan Program:** Jumpstart offers financing for acquisition and renovation of local residential properties. It mimics a bank loan process, including having developers submit a pro forma, comps, and a construction budget. This helps prepare new developers for dealing with traditional bank loans in the future.

## **ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY + COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING**

As with many high-poverty communities, affordable housing alone will not be enough to lift residents out of poverty – increasing access to economic opportunity and building community wealth in creative ways is critical to improve resident quality of life.

### **WEALTH BUILDING THROUGH REAL ESTATE**

While traditional economic development and workforce training is undeniably part of the solution, and will be discussed at length in the next paragraphs, it is first worth noting that North Trenton is particularly well positioned to pursue non-traditional collective investing and community wealth building because of the high rates of vacancy, abandonment and public ownership throughout the study area. Creating an integrated program for rehab and adaptive reuse of abandoned but salvageable buildings in the neighborhood has the potential to simultaneously support capacity building and skill development in the construction trades and real estate development business while also providing the opportunity for residents to build sweat equity or become part of a collective investing model that will enable them to benefit financially from their work to improve their community. Philadelphia-based Jumpstart Germantown is a great model to consider that provides this type of integrated capacity building and community wealth building through real estate development.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT + JOB GROWTH**

Beyond the opportunities for community capacity building and wealth building through real estate development, residents of North Trenton also expressed an interest in attracting new “clean and green” industrial development and more active

local businesses along neighborhood commercial corridors. With the incentives offered through the U.S. Foreign Trade Zones and New Jersey Urban Enterprise Zones, combined with the local tools like zoning and redevelopment areas, North Trenton has the potential to attract dynamic, innovative new businesses, but there is a need for a more nuanced and strategically targeted approach in order to identify, recruit and retain new businesses that will be able to provide family-wage jobs that are attainable for local residents.

Any good economic development strategy needs to leverage existing workforce skill base, anchor employers and economic drivers to grow and add jobs in a way that is stable, sustainable and resilient. If the economic development strategy ignores or fails to leverage what is unique and distinctive about a given place, it makes it more likely that those businesses and investments will eventually move on to wherever offers them the best incentive package rather than staying and putting down roots. Trenton’s economy has long been rooted in two pillars – government and industry – and those ties remain significant today even though the manufacturing jobs it was once known for have diminished in number and evolved to require more education and technological know-how. In present-day Trenton, the biggest sectors are healthcare and social assistance, followed by educational services and public administration. This begins to suggest a new center of gravity for the local economy – one that more closely reflects the “Eds & Meds” (education and medical) pairing that many US cities rely on to anchor the local economy.

To get a sense of what that economic development strategy could look like for Trenton and North Trenton in particular, we started by looking into fellow mid-sized capital cities in former manufacturing regions – Albany, NY; Providence, RI; and Hartford, CT – whose economic profiles might be able to provide some insight into the

types of opportunities Trenton might be well suited to attract. To validate that these can in fact be considered “peer cities” we pulled data on poverty rate, median household income, age mix and racial and ethnic mix, and despite slight variations, the key comparison statistics overall validated that these are relevant peer cities for Trenton. Slight variations, but generally the key statistics validate that these are “peer” cities. Like in Trenton, for many of these cities a majority of workers are White whereas the city populations show higher percentage of Black and Hispanic residents.

When comparing Trenton against these fellow capital cities, a few differences stood out:

- Trenton residents are under-represented in local jobs: 13.5% of Trenton residents are employed in the city versus 30% - 45% of peer city residents being employed in their city. This means reverse commuting is the norm for Trenton residents.

- Albany educational attainment is very similar but earnings are higher – worth looking into the sectors that contribute to Albany’s economy performing better on wages vs. education.
- Health Care and Social Assistance, Educational Services and Public Administration all show up as major economic drivers for the peer cities – this means that these sectors are likely to continue being important employers locally and it is important that Choice residents are equipped to work in these dominant fields.
- Several peer cities have a stronger representation of city residents in sectors that have under-representation of Trenton residents, despite being dominant sectors in Trenton - Public Administration and Educational Services sectors stand out as having under-representation of city residents. This gap could be remedied through a combination of

		ALBANY, NY	PROVIDENCE, RI
Size (sq mi)		21.9	20.6
Population		97,279	179,335
Poverty Rate		23.8%	26.0%
Median Household Income		\$45,500	\$42,158
Age Mix		RESIDENTS EMPLOYEES	RESIDENTS EMPLOYEES
	29 OR YOUNGER	27.6% - 19.6%	29.9% - 21.5%
	30-54	52.6% - 55.7%	52.1% - 53.5%
	55 OR OLDER	19.8% - 24.8%	18.0% - 25.0%
Racial + Ethnic Mix		RESIDENTS EMPLOYEES	RESIDENTS EMPLOYEES
	AFRICAN AMERICAN	30.3% - 12.8%	20.9% - 9.8%
	WHITE	60.2% - 79.9%	68.0% - 83.2%
	OTHER	9.4% - 7.3%	11.1% - 7.0%
	HISPANIC	8.3% - 5.5%	33.8% - 14.2%

workforce development programs and incentive programs that encourage employees in these sectors to live in the city.

- Many peer cities have a more significant number of local jobs in Manufacturing and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services sectors, which could be growth areas for Trenton.

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, ANCHOR EMPLOYERS + THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT GAP**

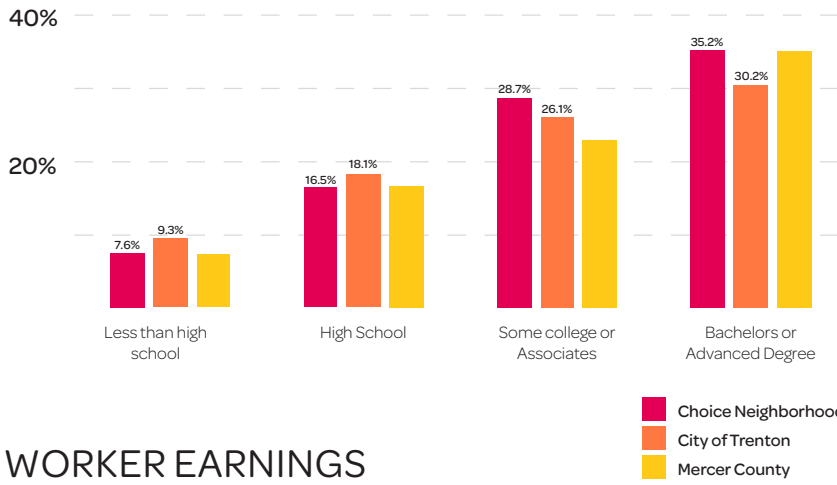
In addition to intentionally recruiting, attracting and growing the local business and employment opportunities, it is also important to focus on how to create a stronger Choice neighborhood resident workforce connection not only with Trenton’s anchor employers and existing dominant sectors, but also with the new sectors Trenton is best positioned to attract and grow. Dominant local

job sectors currently are Health Care, Education and Social Assistance - how can we ensure Choice residents are able to work in these fields? Professional, scientific, technical, and educational services sectors are all underrepresented within City of Trenton and Choice Neighborhood resident occupations compared to the participation of residents elsewhere in the region who work in these sectors. By contrast, the dominant Choice Neighborhood resident occupations include Health Care and Social Assistance, Retail Trade, Waste Management and Administration and Support, and Transportation and Warehousing. Creating intentional workforce development pipelines that connect from current resident occupations to higher wage jobs that build on their foundational skills could be an important strategy to support better economic opportunity and higher wage earning potential for residents currently stuck in a cycle of poverty.

HARTFORD, CT		CITY OF TRENTON	
18.1		8.2	
122,587		83,974	
30.1%		28.4%	
\$34,338		\$35,387	
RESIDENTS	EMPLOYEES	RESIDENTS	EMPLOYEES
28.9%	16.4%	25.8%	16.3%
42.7%	57.9%	54.9%	55.8%
17.9%	25.7%	19.3%	28.0%
RESIDENTS	EMPLOYEES	RESIDENTS	EMPLOYEES
43.3%	17.4%	53.4%	29.2%
48.8%	74.5%	40.7%	62.3%
7.9%	8.1%	5.9%	8.4%
36.5%	14.7%	24.9%	14.4%

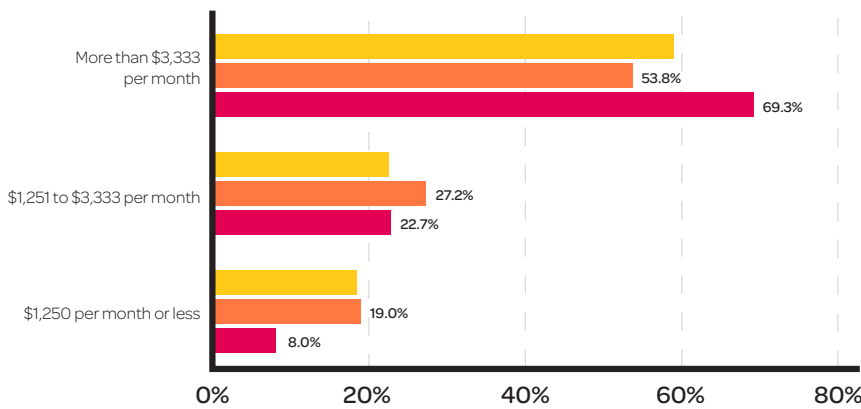
### WORKER EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

percent of location, for employees NOT residents

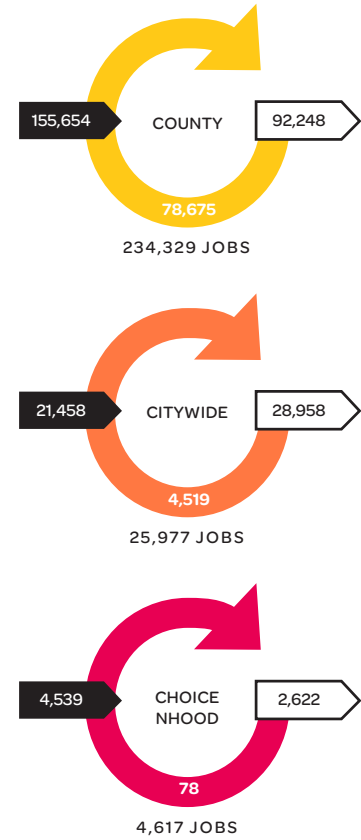


### WORKER EARNINGS

percent of location, for employees NOT residents



### INFLOW / OUTFLOW



^ **FIGURE 18. EMPLOYMENT FACTS**

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, ONTHEMAP APPLICATION AND LEHD ORIGIN-DESTINATION EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS (BEGINNING OF QUARTER EMPLOYMENT, 2ND QUARTER OF 2002-2017), 2017 - ONTHEMAP.CES.CENSUS.GOV

Beyond the overall citywide employment disconnect, there is also a particularly severe disconnect for Choice neighborhood residents. VERY few - only 3% - of Choice Neighborhood residents work in the neighborhood. Jobs in the Choice Neighborhood seem to require more education and have higher earnings than city and county - presumably this reflects the health sector jobs. How can we make these local health-sector jobs more attainable for our residents? More broadly, how can we create a stronger workforce

connection with Trenton’s anchor employers and dominant or potential sectors? Below is a list of some of the top regional employers that might be important partners in any workforce development programs – bolded ones have a presence in or very nearby the Choice neighborhood.



## JUNIOR 1 INTERIOR

### ► Health + Social Assistance

- » **Capital Health Systems Inc.**
- » Horizon NJ Health
- » St. Francis Medical Center
- » Bayada Nurses

### ► Educational Services

- » New Jersey Education Association
- » Board of Education of the City of Trenton
- » College of New Jersey
- » New Jersey State Library

### ► Public Administration

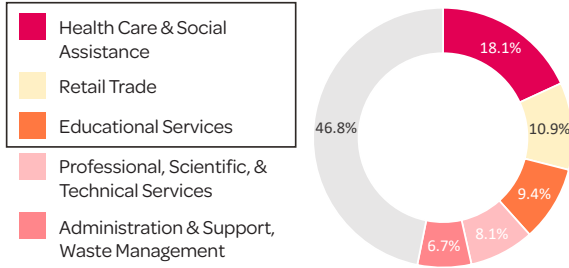
- » NJ State Government – Human Services Division
- » NJ State Police
- » Mercer County Administration

### ► Finance + Professional Services

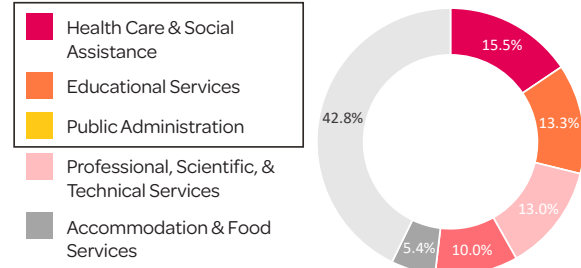
- » Cenlar Capital Corporation + FSB
- » New Jersey Housing & Mortgage Finance Agency
- » The Hibbert Company (marketing / business administration)
- » The Times of Trenton Publishing Corporation (publishing)

LOCAL JOBS

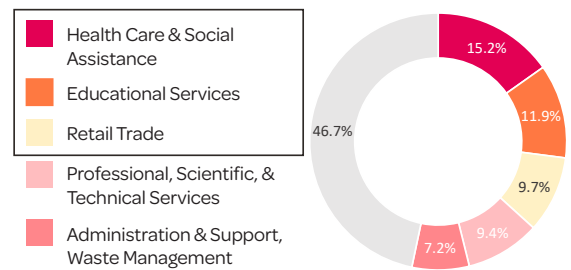
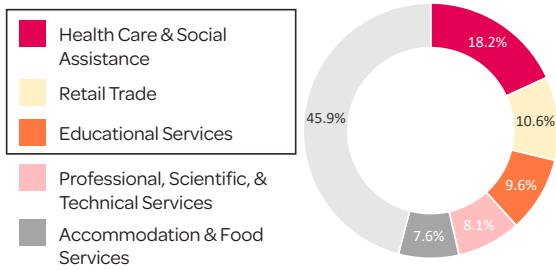
Philadelphia MSA



Mercer County



RESIDENT OCCUPATIONS



^ **FIGURE 19. WORKFORCE & BUSINESS SEGMENT REGIONAL COMPARISON**

SOURCE: LEHD DATA

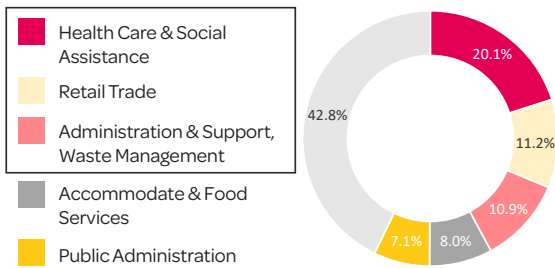
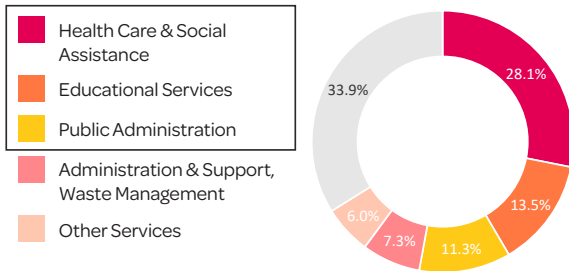
- Manufacturing, Energy, and Waste Management
  - » Congoleum Corporation (manufacturing)
  - » Hough Petroleum Corp (oil & natural gas)
  - » **Hutchinson** (rubber manufacturer/supplier for energy, infrastructure, defense)
  - » **TerraCycle**

One of the most significant barriers that prevents Choice neighborhood residents from securing fulfilling and stable employment in higher-wage industries is the low educational attainment

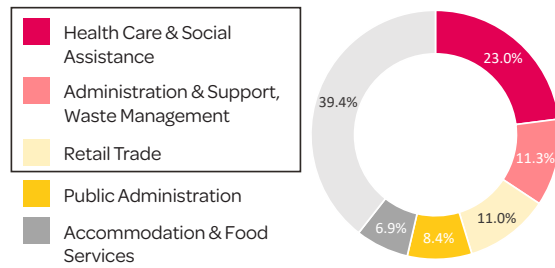
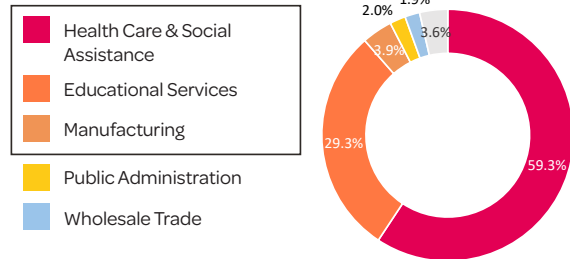
throughout the neighborhood. The highest level of educational attainment for most of the Choice neighborhood is high school. There is a cluster of college graduates in the area by Pennington Ave and Calhoun Street, which also have higher incomes and levels of employment. Just outside the Choice neighborhood, north of the hospital, there is a significant population of professional and post-graduate educated residents.

Creating meaningful, customized and approachable workforce development pipelines that are able to “meet residents where they’re at”

## City of Trenton



## Choice Neighborhood



and support residents in finding the confidence, motivation and skill training they need to succeed in the job market must be a critical component of this plan. The Mercer County OneStop is a trusted provider as are many other existing local institutions – so the infrastructure is there – but it is underutilized. Specifically, there is a need to make it easier for residents to reach out and ask for help. Many stakeholders and residents shared stories of individuals in their lives who helped them take the first step to get the support they needed to find more gainful employment and meaningful

work – but many more don't have that individual in their lives who pushed them to find the help they needed. The existing workforce development programs need one step before – an on-ramp – that helps residents get started before they know exactly what they're looking for.

## YOUTH, EDUCATION + MENTORSHIP

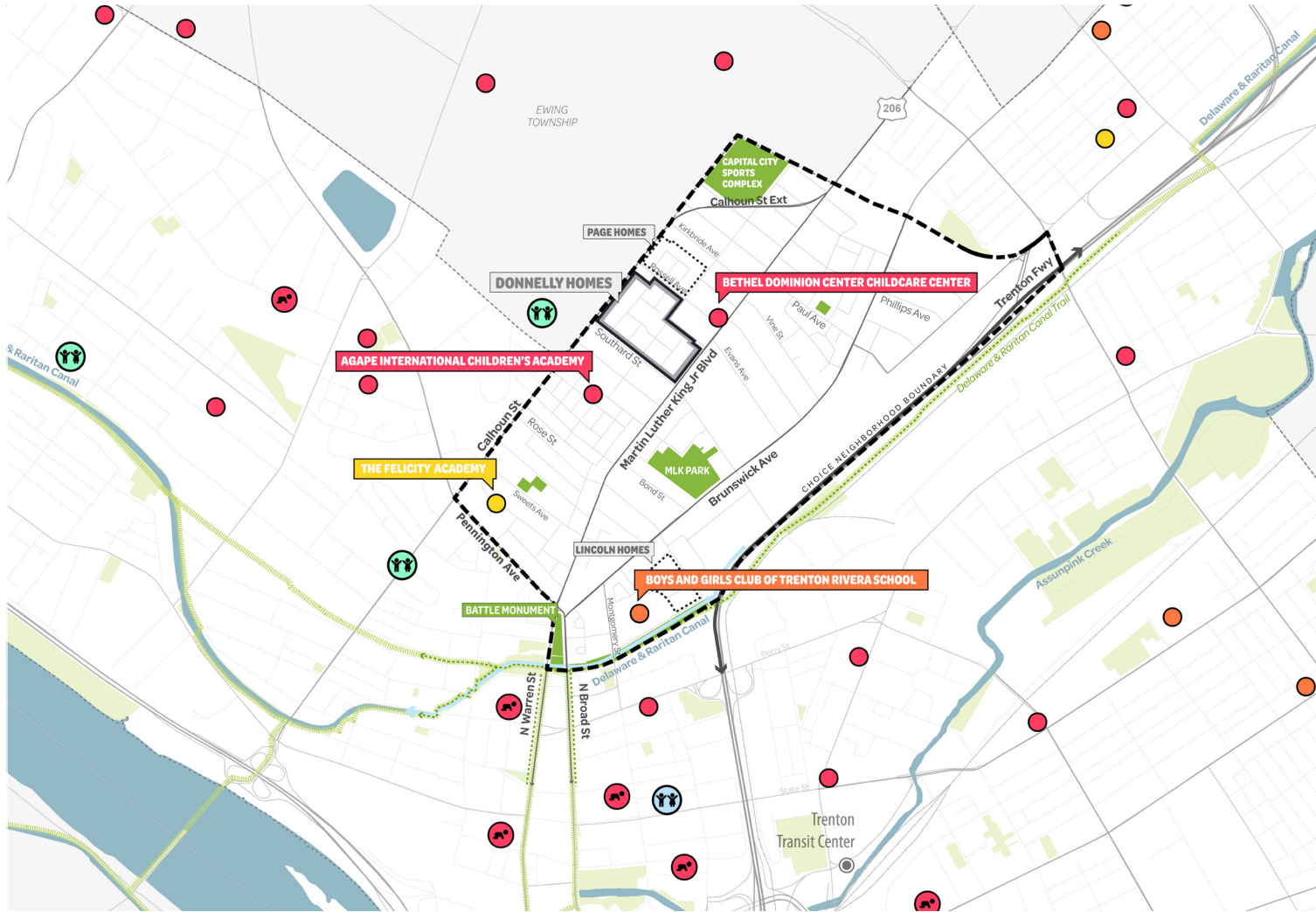
The seeds of economic opportunity and long-term educational outcomes are often sown early in life. As illustrated by research conducted in recent years, it is increasingly clear that early childhood learning programs—more so than conventional daycare or childcare programs—provide a critical foundation that children rely on to navigate and make the most of later years of education. Currently, there are two Early Head Start programs located north and east of Donnelly Homes—one in Ewing Township and one in Trenton along Calhoun Street past Pennington Avenue. The only nearby Head Start program is located in Downtown Trenton near the intersection of State Street and Montgomery Street. As part of the redevelopment of Donnelly Homes, locating a high-quality early childhood learning program on-site could have a significant impact on children at Donnelly and within the larger Choice neighborhood.

Beyond early childhood learning, the neighborhood is home to two Trenton School District schools—MLK Elementary and Luis Munoz-Rivera Middle School. MLK Elementary is a new facility and faces Brunswick Avenue whereas Rivera is an historic facility facing Montgomery Street. Both are somewhat isolated by their locations, despite being an easy walk from most of the neighborhood. Neither has a clear vehicular drop-off traffic circulation pattern. While the schools are well-located and have beautiful buildings, they both could be better integrated into the neighborhood. Physically, this could be achieved with clearer, more visible crosswalks; designated drop-off zones with crossing guards and clear traffic circulation. Main routes to and from the schools should be cleaned, greened, well-lighted and have the sidewalks repaired. Bike lanes should also be well marked.

Overall, the Trenton Public School system is challenged by high numbers of economically-

disadvantaged students as well as significant numbers of students with disabilities, students for whom English is a second language, and students who are homeless or in foster care. This is important because these students need additional support to succeed in school but the Trenton public schools are significantly under-resourced. School budgets are already so tight that most students are not allowed to bring textbooks home because there are not enough textbooks for each student to have their own. Given this condition, it is no surprise that Trenton's public schools demonstrate low test scores and poor outcomes. High chronic absenteeism is perhaps the most obvious challenge facing the schools, but it is best understood as a symptom of broader challenges facing students.


Beyond concerns with the curriculum and educational outcomes, parents shared concerns about it being unsafe for students to travel to and from school, as well as concerns about fights and violence at school. In fact, only 14 percent of survey respondents feel it is safe for children to walk to and home from school. Parents also shared that turnover in leadership at Trenton School District and generational trauma experienced by parents has eroded their belief in the importance of school. The challenges related to the school system itself is compounded by the inability of many parents to fill in for or make up for the shortcomings of the public education their children are getting—30-40 percent of our neighborhood is made up of single parent families and many parents have low education levels and so are not able to help with homework and instruction outside the classroom. This number is even higher at Donnelly Homes where 61 percent of households have at least one child under the age of 18 and yet 76 percent of heads of households are single, separated, divorced or widowed.





^ **FIGURE 20. CHILDCARE PROVIDERS**

SOURCE: [HTTPS://WWW.CHSOFNJ.ORG](https://www.chsofnj.org)

**Child Care Center**

- Child Care Center (Full Day)
- Child Care Center (After School)
- Child Care Center (Uncensored)
-  Child Care Center (Serving Infants & Toddlers)

**Head Start Program**

-  New Jersey Early Head Start Program
-  Trenton Head Start Program

Going forward, it will be important to explore how community organizations, the faith-based community and youth-serving programs and services can help provide the after-school programming, mentorship and parent support resources needed for young people to succeed in school and get the education they need to pursue their future careers. The Rivera Middle School offers the beginning of a model that might help provide the type of wrap-around services needed to support families and youth in gaining the educational outcomes they need. The Rivera Middle School partners with Mercer Street Friends using the “Community School

Model,” which focuses on providing the social services and multi-generational trust building and capacity building needed to holistically support student success. It would be valuable to explore whether this model can be scaled to include MLK Elementary (and local partners) into a continuum of services that supports the whole family, creates a welcoming environment, and begins to break down generational educational trauma that is also contributing to high rates of absenteeism and poor academic performance.

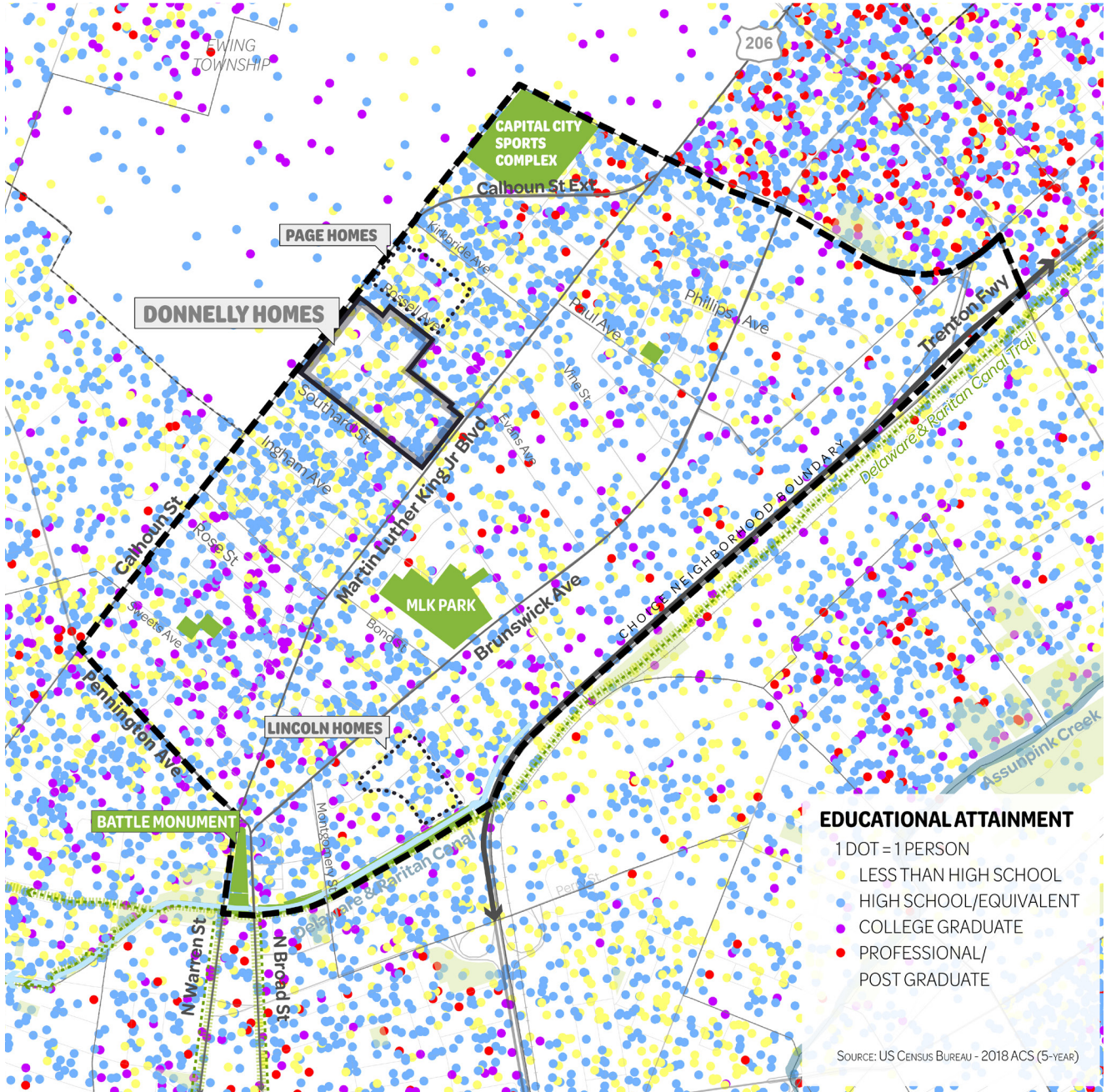
	MLK JR ELEMENTARY	LUIS MUNOZ- RIVERA MIDDLE	9TH GRADE ACADEMY	TRENTON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL
Total #	837	519	751	1,709
Black	46%	60%	38%	44%
Hispanic	52%	39%	60%	55%
Home Language: Spanish	44%	22%	41%	31%
English Learners	41%	13%	24%	20%
Economically Disadvantaged	78%	75%	59%	48%
With Disabilities	12%	23%	17%	17%
In Foster Care	0.4%	1%	0.5%	0.2%
Homeless	3.3%	3.5%	1.1%	1.6%

	MLK JR ELEMENTARY	LUIS MUNOZ- RIVERA MIDDLE	9TH GRADE ACADEMY	TRENTON CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL
Student:Teacher Ratio	17:1	13:1	13:1	11:1
Absent 15 Days +	35%	24%	40%	42%
Chronically Absent	30%	21%	39%	39%
Graduation Rate	-	-	-	81.6%

Class of 2018 ▲  
51.5% post-secondary enrollment (30.6% 2-year, 20.9% 4-year)

<u>NJ Assessment Percentile</u>				
English Language Arts	Below: 32	Met: 48	Below: 16	Below: 21
Math	Below: 27	Below: 35	-	-

▲ FIGURE 21. PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROFILE & PERFORMANCE



^ **FIGURE 22. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

SOURCE: US CENSUS BUREAU - 2018 ACS (5-YEAR)

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**03/**

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**PLANNING  
PROCESS**

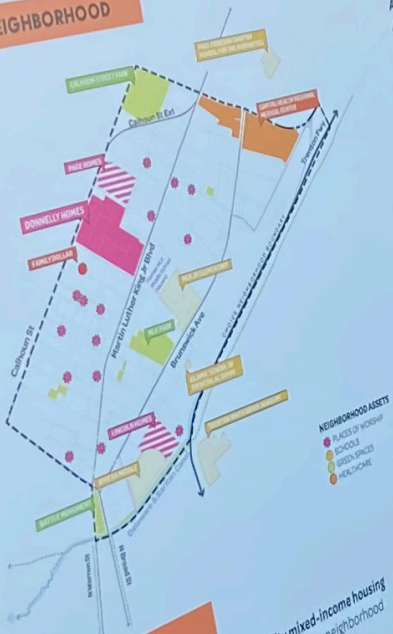
# TRENTON TITLE MONUMENT

about the Trenton Choice planning process and tell us your priorities!



## IS THE TRENTON CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE?

### NEIGHBORHOOD



### WHAT WILL THIS PLAN LEAD TO?

A COMPREHENSIVE ROAD MAP TO ACHIEVE THE COMMUNITY'S VISION FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE.

It will include:

- actionable goals
- timeline for implementation
- metrics to measure progress

### HOW WOULD DONNELLY HOMES RESIDENTS BE AFFECTED?

- RIGHT TO RETURN:** Regardless of how the Donnelly Homes site is redeveloped, all Trenton Housing Authority residents in good standing will have the right to return.
- ONE-FOR-ONE REPLACEMENT:** For every unit of public housing that is demolished, a new unit will be replaced within the neighborhood.

### HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

#### ATTEND A TASK FORCE MEETING

These meetings are open to all residents and community members. Please bring your own ideas and suggestions.

Next meetings:

- Thursday, October 28, 4:00 to 6:00 pm
- Wednesday, October 29, 6:00 to 8:00 pm
- Thursday, October 30, 5:30 to 8:00 pm

#### ASK QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SECTION  
1000 N. 3RD ST.  
TRENTON, NJ 08611

#### FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

SCROLL TO SEE QR CODE

Check out our planning process and tell us your priorities!

## WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Place a dot next to the goals that you want the plan to address.

HOUSING	NEIGHBORHOOD	HEALTH	EMPLOYMENT	PUBLIC SAFETY
<b>POTENTIAL GOALS</b> 1 Redesign housing at Donnelly Homes so that it is more integrated with the community and street grid. (Red dot) 2 Fill vacant lots in the neighborhood with new affordable rental housing. 3 Set up funding for local businesses so they can make necessary improvements to their homes. (Yellow dot) 4 Create opportunities for people to buy a home (with program for cash rental, buying for rent, etc.) (Blue dot)	<b>POTENTIAL GOALS</b> 1 Improve the appearance of N. 3rd Street so that it lives up to its name. (Green dot) 2 Attract more businesses and major employers such as N. 3rd Street to the area and more things to do and more activity. 3 Open a library in the neighborhood. 4 Establish a community garden in the neighborhood.	<b>POTENTIAL GOALS</b> 1 Increase availability of affordable and accessible housing with associated services like childcare, food banks, etc. 2 Increase the number of people who get well-past their high school education, including trade schools. 3 Increase the number of people who get well-past their high school education, including trade schools. 4 Increase the number of people who get well-past their high school education, including trade schools.	<b>POTENTIAL GOALS</b> 1 Create local businesses and jobs. 2 Increase the number of people who get well-past their high school education, including trade schools. 3 Increase the number of people who get well-past their high school education, including trade schools. 4 Increase the number of people who get well-past their high school education, including trade schools.	<b>POTENTIAL GOALS</b> 1 Increase the number of people who get well-past their high school education, including trade schools. 2 Increase the number of people who get well-past their high school education, including trade schools. 3 Increase the number of people who get well-past their high school education, including trade schools. 4 Increase the number of people who get well-past their high school education, including trade schools.

## TIMELINE



# 03/ PLANNING PROCESS

**No one knows the community better than the people living there. Residents of Donnelly Homes are at the forefront of the planning and engagement process as members of the Steering Committee, every Task Force, and the Action Activity Committee. Neighborhood residents have also been invited to participate so that together, all residents may share their insight on the process and help write the next chapter of the North Trenton Battle Monument neighborhood.**

**A mix of housing and open spaces; roadways and sidewalks that allow traffic to flow while pedestrians and cyclists are safe; places for education, employment, worship and fun; strategies to attract businesses and keep crime to a minimum; and that little extra something that gives a community its own sense of place or identity... These are just some of the pieces that can make a neighborhood flourish. Our team brings together all of these disciplines to help the community heal, to brush off layers of deterioration, and make it attractive and inviting again, recreating a place where people come to live, work, and thrive.**

## OUR TEAM

### OUR PARTNERS

The Trenton Housing Authority (THA) is the glue—leading the North Trenton-Battle Monument Choice Neighborhood Planning process by bringing together residents, city leaders, neighboring townships, and local anchor organizations.

#### TRENTON HOUSING AUTHORITY (THA)

For over 80 years, THA has provided thousands of Trenton families with safe, affordable housing and the tools necessary to become self-sufficient. Today, THA manages 11 housing developments with close to 1,700 residences that are home to approximately 3,200 residents. Setting its sights on an even more ambitious goal, THA is aiming to be a leader of neighborhood revitalization efforts in Trenton, recognizing that quality affordable housing, in safe neighborhoods, with access to opportunity, is a cornerstone to building healthy and vibrant communities. In addition to overseeing the planning process and chairing the Steering Committee, THA is leading the Housing Task Force.

#### CITY OF TRENTON DIVISION OF PLANNING

The Division of Planning promotes sustainable communities, strategic growth, transit-oriented

development, and comprehensive, consensus-based planning for the City. It also establishes policies and zoning regulations so that development is carefully coordinated. The Division of Planning recently completed Trenton250, the City’s comprehensive plan to guide development through 2042. The Division will play an integral role in the Choice Neighborhood planning process as the lead of the Neighborhood Task Force.

#### ISLES, INC.

This Trenton-based community development and environmental organization fosters self-reliant families and healthy, sustainable communities through a number of programs and initiatives. These include a Youth Institute, urban agriculture, financial training and wealth building programs, as well as community planning and development. As the lead of the People Task Force, Isles is drawing upon its many relationships with neighborhood partners to develop people-related strategies that foster self-sufficiency and wellness through sound education, meaningful employment, and access to a full range of healthcare services.

#### RESIDENT COUNCIL AND AMBASSADORS

A Resident Council was re-established at Donnelly Homes as the Choice planning effort began. Three Council officers and one other resident are serving

as ambassadors for the Choice Neighborhood Plan to share information with their friends and neighbors and encourage their participation in meetings, activities, and events. Council officers and ambassadors also serve as members of the Steering Committee, all Task Forces, and the Action Activity Committee.

## HOW OUR TEAM IS ORGANIZED

### STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee was set up to oversee the progress of the planning process, to review the recommendations of the Task Forces and Action Activity Committee and to make sure the vision outlined by the plan reflects the aspirations of Donnelly Homes residents and the surrounding community.

### TASK FORCES

Three working groups or “task forces” are focused on the three elements of the plan—Housing, People, Neighborhood. These task forces are responsible for identifying the community’s priorities and then shaping goals and strategies for the plan. They also will collect and recommend ideas for Action Activities.

**There have been 12 Task Force Meetings so far. They are open to everyone. Please join us!**

Members of the task forces include Donnelly Homes residents, non-profit organizations, city partners, health and education representatives, and local churches. To date, the task forces have assembled questions for the Needs Assessment Survey, reviewed the existing conditions analysis prepared by WRT, discussed the findings of the Needs Assessment and assembled a long list of challenges that the plan should address. In response, they have developed potential strategies to tackle the challenges along with a



**TASK FORCE MEETINGS**

**ACTION ACTIVITIES**



**WHAT ARE ACTION ACTIVITIES?**

Action Activities are meant to jumpstart change in the Choice Neighborhood. The funding must be used for innovative solutions to neighborhood challenges and for projects that can be completed within a few years after the plan is finished.

- ▶ Turning a vacant site into a community garden, pocket park, or farmers market.
- ▶ Setting up a community garden tool shed and sharing program.
- ▶ Creating a community arts project such as a mural or signage about a historic event, or person.
- ▶ Establishing an improvement program for homeowners or business storefronts.
- ▶ Installing neighborhood broadband/Wi-Fi infrastructure.

set of preliminary goals. The goals, strategies and vision are described later in this document and will continue to be refined and prioritized as the plan takes shape.

**ACTION ACTIVITY COMMITTEE**

In addition to the funding for development of a Neighborhood Plan, THA also received funding for Action Activities. These activities are limited to physical neighborhood improvements and are intended to demonstrate that change is coming. Ideas for the activities are meant to stem from the planning process. The Committee’s first meeting is planned for December 2020. At that meeting, the Committee will assemble a set of criteria to evaluate the ideas proposed by the Task Forces. The Committee will ultimately select the activities it wants to accomplish but they must first be approved by HUD.

**ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN AN UNCOMMON TIME**

**SAFE ENGAGEMENT DURING QUARANTINE**

The North Trenton Battle Monument Choice Neighborhood planning process set out to gather ideas from every corner of the community, and envisioned a series of big public workshops and events with dozens of other small meetings and discussions in between *and in person*. But the year 2020 had other ideas.

The COVID-19 pandemic started stretching around the globe in March. Since then, we have been experimenting with new engagement tools to make sure that the voices, stories, and preferences of residents are guiding the plan development. These have included zoom calls with chat rooms, outdoor events with social distancing, and most

recently, jamboards, The process will continue to evolve as we navigate the pandemic but the goal will remain the same—to bring residents and partners together in meaningful, transparent discussions and maximize available resources to transform the North Trenton / Battle Monument Neighborhood.

### **MEETING RESIDENT NEEDS FIRST**

The pandemic has disproportionately impacted low-income minority communities like North Trenton, putting them at greater risk for serious illness and for deeper struggles with quality health care, job losses, housing and food security, children’s education, and childcare. For this reason, residents’ needs come first.

COVID-19 turned the world upside down right after we launched the Needs Assessment Survey in February, forcing many children to learn from home. THA had partnered with T-Mobile to provide a free tablet and 6 months of free internet access to every Donnelly Homes household that completed a survey. THA continued to make the tablets available, which proved to be a lifesaver for many families.

THA also assembled care packages for every household filled with much needed and not-so-easy-to-find personal protective equipment such as masks and hand sanitizer. These greatly appreciated packages included another opportunity to collect surveys from residents and share information about the Choice neighborhood.

### **NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY**

What makes this neighborhood special? What one thing do wish you could change? What activities would help your children thrive? Do you feel safe walking in the neighborhood? The Needs Assessment Survey is one of the most effective ways to learn about the challenges residents face day in and day out as well as their aspirations. It is also one way to reach a wide number of residents who may not have time or the desire to participate in meetings or events.

## THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

### WHAT DID THE SURVEY ADDRESS?



SECTION 1  
**NEIGHBORHOOD**



SECTION 2  
**HOUSING**



SECTION 3  
**PUBLIC SAFETY**



SECTION 4  
**EMPLOYMENT & INCOME**



SECTION 5  
**CHILDREN & EDUCATION**



SECTION 6  
**HEALTH, WELLNESS & NUTRITION**



SECTION 7  
**TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATIONS**



SECTION 8  
**THE FUTURE**

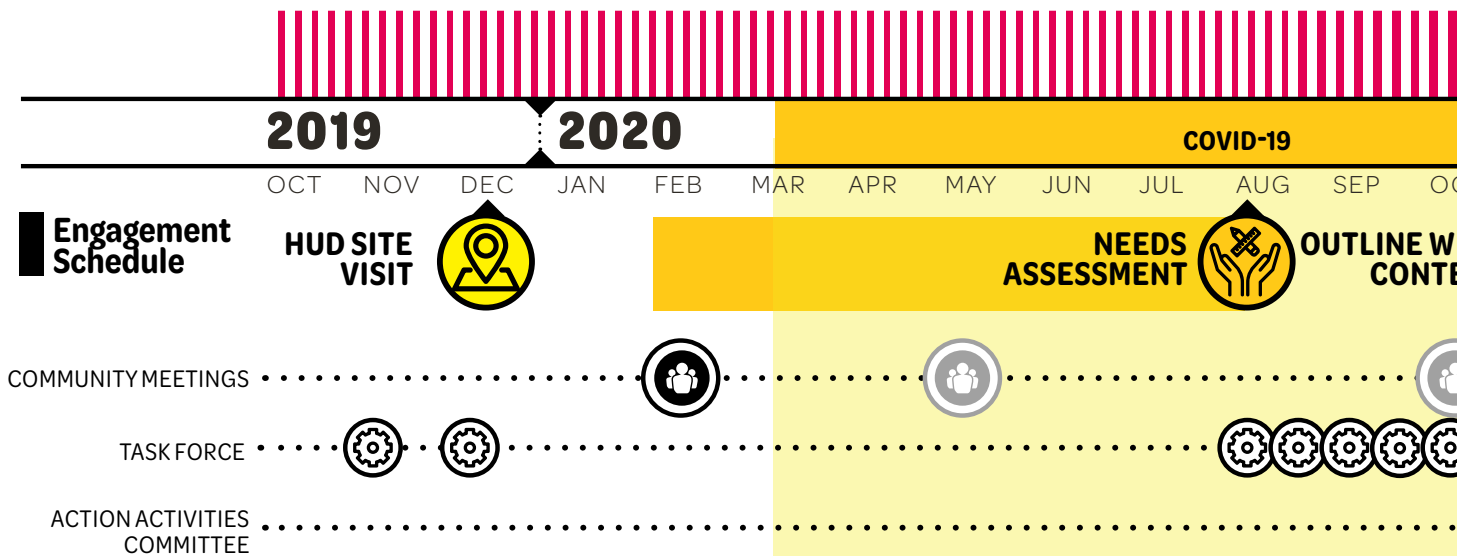
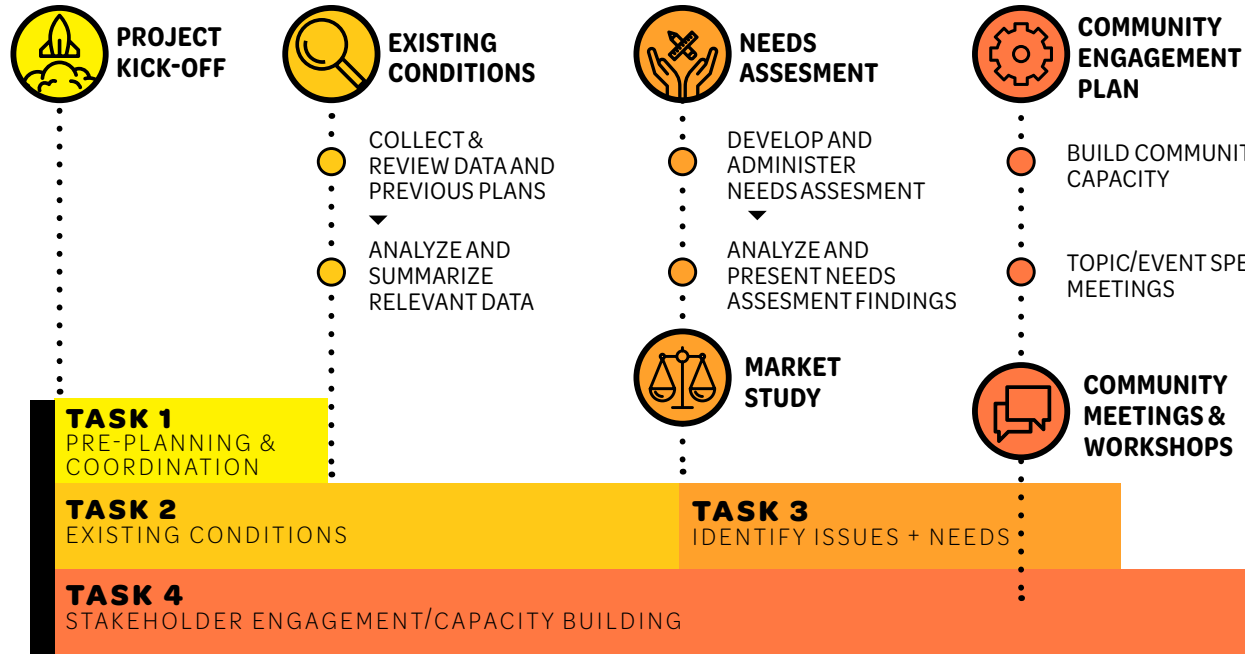


SECTION 9  
**DEMOGRAPHICS**

# ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## PROJECT TIMELINE + ENGAGEMENT SCHEDULE

### Project Tasks and Milestones



DURING THIS TIME PERIOD, THE PLANNING PROCESS WAS CONSTRAINED BY ADVERSE IMPACTS COMBINED TO MAXIMIZE PARTICIPATION. HYBRID MEETINGS WERE HELD USING ZOOM WITH A CONSIDERING THE FORMAT OF EACH MEETING AND EVENT TO ENGAGE AS MANY RESIDENTS AS



### PLAN DEVELOPMENT

- DEVELOP CHOICE HOUSING TRANSFORMATION PLAN
- DEVELOP CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSFORMATION PLAN
- DEVELOP CHOICE PEOPLE TRANSFORMATION PLAN
- FIRST PHASE DUE DILIGENCE



### IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP EARLY ACTION ACTIVITIES

- PLAN, DESIGN, AND IMPLEMENT EARLY ACTION ACTIVITIES
- ESTABLISH ACTION ACTIVITY CRITERIA AND IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PROJECTS
- SUBMIT RECOMMENDED ACTION ACTIVITIES FOR HUD REVIEW AND APPROVAL



### CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSFORMATION PLAN

- SELECT MASTER DEVELOPER/ HOUSING DEVELOPER
- OUTLINE WITH CONTENT
- DRAFT TRANSFORMATION PLAN
- FINAL TRANSFORMATION PLAN

**TASK 5**  
DEVELOP STRATEGIES AND PLANS - HOUSING, PEOPLE, NEIGHBORHOOD

**TASK 6**  
ACTION ACTIVITIES

**TASK 7**  
TRANSFORMATION PLAN

IMPLEMENT ACTION ACTIVITIES

**2021**

CT NOV DEC JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN JUL AUG SEP OCT NOV

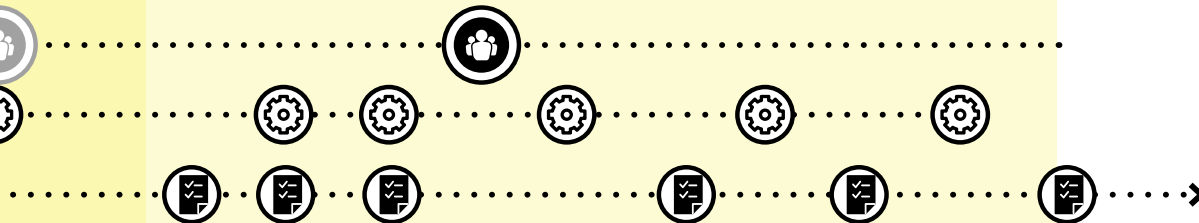
WITH  
MENT



**DRAFT  
TRANSFORMATION  
PLAN**



**FINAL TRANSFORMATION &  
ACTION ACTIVITIES PROPOSAL**



OF THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH AND ECONOMIC CRISIS. LARGE PUBLIC MEETINGS WERE NOT HELD. STEERING & TASK FORCE MEETINGS WERE SMALL GROUP OF RESIDENTS GATHERING ON-SITE AT DONNELLY HOMES. GOING FORWARD, WE WILL REMAIN FLEXIBLE AND CREATIVE, CAREFULLY D PARTNERS AS POSSIBLE IN A SAFE MANNER.



The Steering Committee and all three Task Forces developed the questions for the Needs Assessment survey tool. The survey was launched on Saturday, February 8, 2020, during a neighborhood festival held at Donnelly Homes with music and activities celebrating Black History Month. The survey was offered on paper and online through August 4, 2020. Just over 60 percent of households at Donnelly Homes, 212 in total, completed a survey.



Results of the survey were presented and discussed with the community during a series of six Task Force Meetings to ensure the findings were generally consistent with residents' experiences and to identify issues to explore further. A summary report was prepared by WRT and shared with planning partners, Task Forces, and is available to the community on THA's website.

### GETTING THE WORD OUT

Circulating information about the planning process comes in many forms—from traditional printed materials such as flyers, brochures, and posters to social media posts and an online video.

THA's website hosts an online resource hub with information about the Choice Neighborhood planning effort (<https://www.tha-nj.org/choice-neighborhoods-planning-initiative/>). This page provides an overview of the CNI and contains meeting materials and presentations, offering a great way to get familiar with Trenton Choice.

THA's facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/trentonhousing/>) posts information about upcoming meetings, events, and opportunities to get involved.

To help spread the word about upcoming Choice activities, THA distributes flyers to Donnelly Homes residents and includes updates in its monthly newsletter. Resident Ambassadors also help generate interest and participation by sharing updates with their friends and neighbors.



### NEEDS ASSESSMENT LAUNCH EVENT

**Wondering when the next Choice Neighborhood Meeting will be? Follow us on Facebook and visit the THA website**



[HTTPS://WWW.THA-NJ.ORG/  
CHOICE-NEIGHBORHOODS-  
PLANNING-INITIATIVE/](https://www.tha-nj.org/choice-neighborhoods-planning-initiative/)



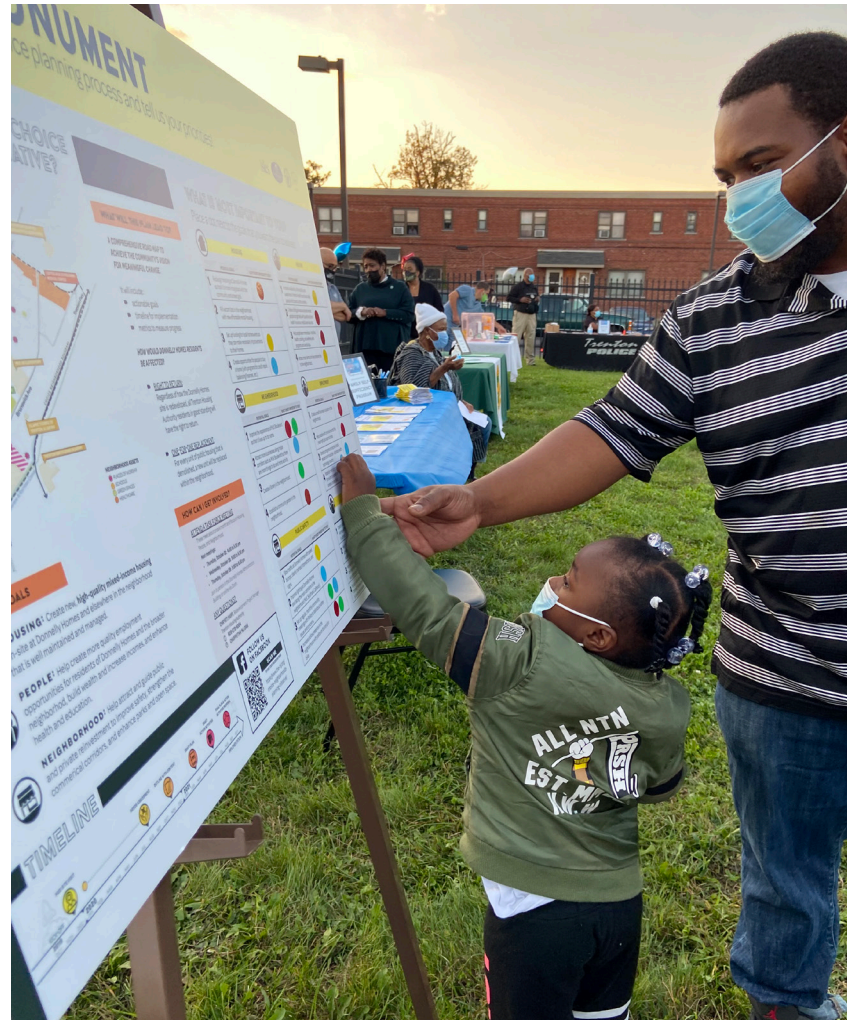
[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/  
TRENTONHOUSING/](https://www.facebook.com/trentonhousing/)

## COMMUNITY MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

With circumstances surrounding COVID-19 changing from day to day and season to season, we will evaluate the format of each meeting to ensure everyone's health and safety. Our hope is to continue to use a variety of virtual and in-person tools so that everyone who wants to has a chance to participate fully and safely. The last several Task Force Meetings have been held virtually through Zoom with an option for Donnelly Homes residents to participate in-person, with masks and socially-distanced in the Donnelly Gymnasium. Some meetings have used feedback boards that remain on display to gather as much resident input as possible. We will also explore holding larger events outside similar to National Night Out.

## LEADERSHIP SERIES (COMING SOON!)

The Neighborhood Leadership Series is envisioned to build local capacity by helping to give residents (of Donnelly Homes and surrounding neighborhood) the tools necessary to participate meaningfully in the Choice planning effort as well as other community development initiatives and actively shape their neighborhood. The multi-part series will cover topics such as the history of the neighborhood; community organizing; conflict



## NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

resolution; starting a business or non-profit; and trauma and resilience. City leaders will lead the interactive sessions, which will include dinner. The intent is build a level of comfort among participants with the community planning process, and help to identify and nurture local leaders and stewards of the Choice plan.

**A Youth Leadership Series** is also being considered to introduce young adults to community planning and to show them how they can change the neighborhood in which they live. Through the lens of the Choice neighborhood, participants would learn about community history, land use and zoning, economic development, asset-based planning, the role of planners, and the importance of community involvement.

# ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

## PRINTED MATERIALS

To reach as many residents of Donnelly Homes and the surrounding neighborhood, we developed an eye-catching brand that has been integrated into flyers, brochures, and handouts that explain the Choice effort, ways to get involved and upcoming events.

### CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD EXPLAINER PAMPHLET

**NORTH TRENTON BATTLE MONUMENT**  
IMAGINING A NEIGHBORHOOD OF CHOICE

isles | TRENTON HOUSING AUTHORITY | WRT

**WHAT IS CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD?**  
Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Choice Neighborhood Initiative (CNI) encourages public and private organizations to support locally-driven development and investment in their own neighborhoods through a combination of public and private resources.

**ABOUT THE TRENTON CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS INITIATIVE**  
**A PLANNING & ACTION GRANT**  
On September 10, 2018, the Trenton Housing Authority and City of Trenton received a Phase Two CNI Choice Neighborhoods Planning and Action Grant from HUD for the amount of \$1,500,000.  
20 applications were received and only 4 grants were awarded.  
The grant will support a 2-year planning process followed by 15 years to implement action initiatives, which include innovative community and economic development activities that help communities build momentum and accelerate change in the neighborhood.

**CNI FOCUSES ON THREE CORE GOALS**

- HOUSING:** Replacing distressed public and assisted housing with high-quality mixed-income housing that is well-managed and responsive to the needs of the surrounding neighborhood.
- PEOPLE:** Improving outcomes of households living in the largest housing segment to **employment and income, health, and children's outcomes.**
- NEIGHBORHOOD:** Creating the conditions necessary for public and private investment to disinvested neighborhoods by offering the kinds of services and assets that are important to families choosing about their community.

**NEIGHBORHOOD ASSETS**

- ACCESS TO SERVICES
- RECREATION
- HEALTHCARE
- TRANSPORTATION
- EDUCATION
- EMPLOYMENT
- HOUSING
- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

**THE PLANNING PROCESS** will build on existing assets in the community and leverage opportunities across the Capital Health Regional Medical Center, the Trenton Correctional Institute, and the Capital Health Center for Health Research and Innovation (CHRI) to create a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood.

**THIS IMPORTANT NOTES TO RESIDENTS REGARDING THE REVENUE PLAN:**

- RIGHT TO RETURN:** Department of how the Donnelly Homes site is redeveloped, the Trenton Housing Authority reserves the right to purchase and lease the right to return.
- RENTAL AND HOMEOWNERS:** The new and old public housing units are available for the Community Homes site, a new unit will be replaced within the neighborhood.

**COME OUT FOR EVENTS**  
There will be several community-wide meetings, in addition to special events and activities during the planning process to keep everyone updated on the latest news in the neighborhood. These will provide opportunities for you to express your opinion and preferences on things such as housing types and styles, neighborhood improvements, education and employment programs. Be on the lookout for upcoming announcements.

**STAY IN TOUCH**  
Life is busy but you can still follow the progress of the North Trenton-Battle Monument Choice Neighborhood planning process.

**CONSIDER JOINING A TASK FORCE**  
There are three Task Forces: **Planning People** (addressing issues like education, employment, and health); **our Neighborhood** (considering economic development, safety, connectivity, green space, etc.)

**CHRISTIE HUFF**  
Sign up for our newsletter, or **FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**CHRISTIE HUFF**  
609-276-5004  
CHRISTIE@TRA.NJ.GOV

**TRIAL ACTION**  
2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025

### FLYERS & HANDOUTS

**NORTH TRENTON BATTLE MONUMENT**  
Choice Neighborhood Plan

**COMPLETE A SURVEY TODAY!**  
*complete una encuesta hoy!*

**WHAT DO YOU WANT THE FUTURE OF YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD TO LOOK LIKE?**  
*¿Cómo quieres que sea el futuro de tu vecindario?*

Complete this survey to let us know what issues are most important to you—education, youth programs, job training, healthcare, wellness, recreational opportunities, gardens, an attractive main street with shops nearby.

**Fill out a survey today!**  
Tell us what changes you would like to see.  
*¿Cuéntanos un cambio que te gustaría ver!*

**Help us reach our goal!**  
We hope to collect surveys from 100 households. We are halfway to our goal.  
*Agradecemos el apoyo de nuestros vecinos. Esperamos recibir respuestas de 100 hogares. Estamos a medio camino de nuestro objetivo.*

**SCAN ME**  
TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY IN ENGLISH  
Open the camera app on your smartphone and point it at the QR code to scan and open the online survey.

**ESCANÉAME**  
PARA COMPLETAR LA ENCUESTA EN ESPAÑOL  
Abra la aplicación de la cámara en su teléfono o inteligente apuntando a este código QR para escanear y abrir la encuesta en línea.

For more information, contact:  
Christie Huff  
Redevelopment Project Manager | Trenton Housing Authority  
PI 609-276-5004 | E | chuff@tra.nj.gov

**NORTH TRENTON BATTLE MONUMENT**  
Choice Neighborhood Plan

**COMPLETE A SURVEY TODAY!**

**WHAT DO YOU WANT THE FUTURE OF DONNELLY HOMES AND OUR NEIGHBORHOOD TO LOOK LIKE?**

Please complete this survey to let us know what issues are most important to you—educational services, employment assistance, recreational opportunities, wellness, an attractive main street with shops nearby.

For help, please contact Pamela Brooks at THA (609-276-5012), for assistance with the survey and to pick up your tablet.

**Stay safe & healthy!**  
We hope that you and your family are sheltering safely at home. Please let us know if we can assist you in any way.

**Fill out a survey today!**  
Healthcare, youth programs, job training, career counseling, gardens... please tell us what changes you would like to see.

**Receive a tablet with Wi-Fi!**  
Looking for something to keep you and your kids busy? Every Donnelly household that completes a survey will receive a tablet with Wi-Fi.\*

**Help us reach our goal!**  
We hope to collect surveys from 200 Donnelly households. We are half way to our goal.

\*Limit of 1 tablet per household and two Wi-Fi for 6 months.

For more information, contact:  
Christie Huff  
Redevelopment Project Manager | Trenton Housing Authority  
PI 609-276-5004 | E | chuff@tra.nj.gov

**NORTH TRENTON BATTLE MONUMENT**  
Choice Neighborhood Plan

**TASK FORCE MEETINGS**

Please join us! Help us plan for the future of the North Trenton Battle Monument Choice Neighborhood by participating in the following community conversations, where we will share results from the survey.

**WEDNESDAYS FROM 3:00PM TO 4:30PM**  
ONLINE AND IN-PERSON

**Staying Safe:**  
Donnelly Residents can join the meeting with their own computer or mobile device. OR they can participate in person at a safe distance in the gymnasium at Donnelly Homes.

**Register and participate:**  
**ONLINE:** <http://www.trentonchoice-taskforcemeetings.eventbrite.com/>  
**BY EMAIL:** Send an email to: [Christie.Huff@THA.chu@tra.nj.gov](mailto:Christie.Huff@THA.chu@tra.nj.gov)  
**IN PERSON:** Come to the gymnasium at 2:45 pm on the date.

**Can't make it, don't worry.**  
Each meeting will be recorded and posted to <https://www.facebook.com/trentonhousing/> where you can watch it at your convenience.

August 10: Housing  
September 2: Neighborhood  
September 9: Public safety  
September 16: Health  
September 23: Employment  
September 30: Education

For more information, contact:  
Christie Huff  
Redevelopment Project Manager | Trenton Housing Authority  
PI 609-276-5004 | E | chuff@tra.nj.gov



# ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

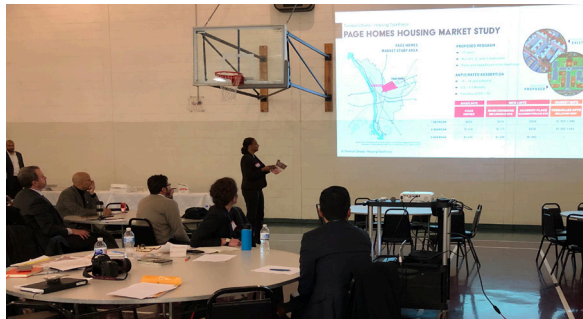
## PROJECT MEETINGS

The planning process began with in-person meetings, which helped us get to know one another. More recently, our task force meetings have involved a hybrid approach of meeting virtually through Zoom and concurrently on-site at Donnelly Homes at a safe distance.

### RESIDENT & TASK FORCE MEETINGS

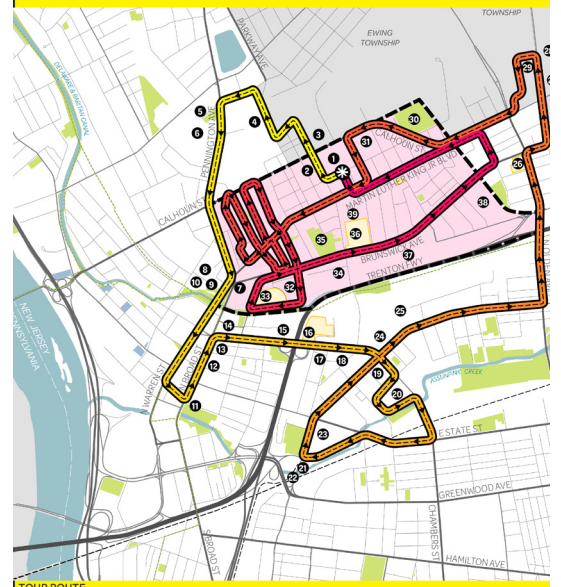


### HUD SITE VISIT & BUS TOUR



### NORTH TRENTON - BATTLE MONUMENT CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD

NEIGHBORHOOD TOUR MAP December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019

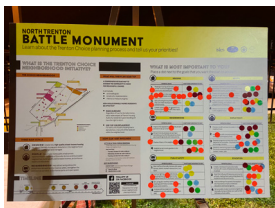
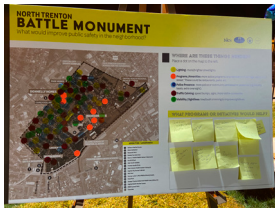
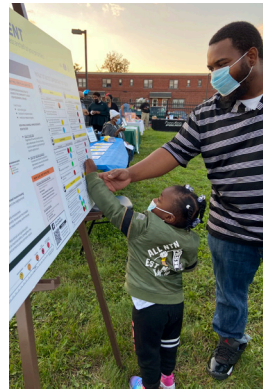


- TOUR ROUTE**
- 1 Donnelly Homes
  - 2 Henry J. Auden Health Center
  - 3 Trenton Public Library
  - 4 Trenton Health Clinic
  - 5 Trenton Fire Department and Museum
  - 6 Trenton Charter School
  - 7 Trenton Police HQ
  - 8 Capital City Park
  - 9 Henry Auden Health Center at Engle St.
  - 10 Trenton Public Library
  - 11 Trenton Health Clinic
  - 12 Trenton Fire Department and Museum
  - 13 Trenton Charter School
  - 14 Trenton Police HQ
  - 15 Capital City Park
  - 16 Paul Robeson Charter School for the Humanities
  - 17 Trenton Farmers Market
  - 18 Hill Farm
  - 19 Capitol Plaza
  - 20 Calhoun Street Park
  - 21 Page Homes
  - 22 Lincoln Homes
  - 23 Rivers School (Lincoln School)
  - 24 Hill Park
  - 25 M.L.K., Jr. Elementary
  - 26 Hill Farm
  - 27 Capital Health Medical Center
  - 28 Trenton M.K. Middle School (closed)

# NEIGHBORHOOD EVENTS

A highlight of the planning process so far was our Needs Assessment Launch that celebrated Black History Month. More recently, we enjoyed National Night Out.

## NATIONAL NIGHT OUT



## PPE CARE PACKAGES FOR SURVEY RESPONDENTS



## NEEDS ASSESSMENT LAUNCH

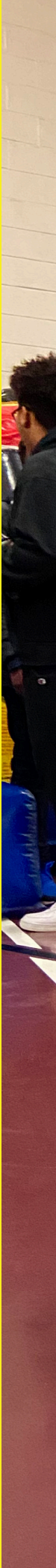


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**04/**

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**A NEW  
STORY**





# 04/ A NEW STORY

As the North Trenton/Battle Monument Choice Neighborhood turns the page on a new chapter, it has a lot to build on, from a rich history that is intertwined with the nation's to the character of its tree-lined streets and beautiful architectural details. The neighborhood is a short walk from the heart of Trenton, and a short train ride New York City and Philadelphia. It inherited a tradition of creativity, industriousness and productivity, but perhaps its greatest source of strength is the sense of community.

Unfortunately, it is hard not to notice how the neighborhood has deteriorated on a quick walk or drive along a main street like MLK Boulevard that leads to downtown. Buildings are crumbling, boarded up, and covered in weeds, and the streetscape is interrupted by empty lots and rumped sidewalks. Few shops seem to be open for business and even fewer people are walking about.

In contrast, the parking lot at Donnelly Homes is lively as people are coming and going. It turns out, Donnelly Homes is a stabilizing force in the neighborhood and often a place where people come to hang out. Because it is an anchor of the community, the site is a critical piece in the revitalization of the neighborhood.

“Would you like to return to new housing on the redeveloped Donnelly Homes site?”



“How do you feel about creating a mix of housing on-site at Donnelly Homes to attract residents with a mix of incomes?”

“I LIKE THE IDEA OF A MIXED-INCOME COMMUNITY AS LONG AS THERE IS STILL PLENTY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING”



“SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD IDEA”



“I WOULD PREFER ONLY AFFORDABLE HOUSING ON-SITE AT DONNELLY”



## DEVELOPING THE HOUSING STORY

### WHAT WE HAVE HEARD SO FAR

#### SENSE OF COMMUNITY

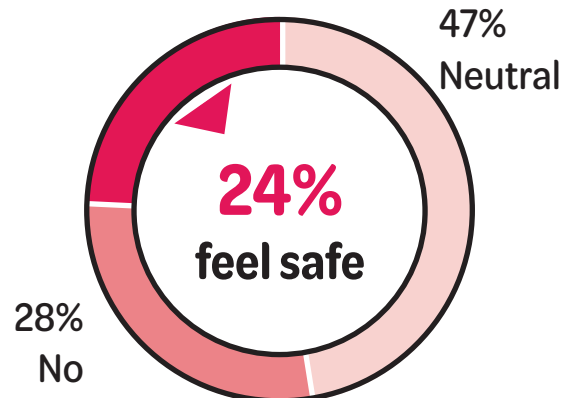
Above all else, Donnelly Homes is a community. And it would like to be recognized as such across the city. Too many times, a negative incident happens nearby and it is mistakenly connected to Donnelly Homes. In fact, Donnelly Homes is a bright spot in the community and a source of pride for those living there. An overwhelming number of residents (89%) who took the Needs Assessment Survey would like to return and live on-site if Donnelly Homes is rebuilt and feel the redevelopment should foster this sense of community.

#### VIOLENCE AND SAFETY

Concerns about crime and safety enter every conversation about the Choice Neighborhood whether the topic is education, open space, exercise, wellness, or housing. In Task Force discussions, residents mentioned that walking used to be their main form of exercise but they no longer feel comfortable doing that. Similarly, children attending the neighborhood public schools do not have access to transportation but only a small percentage of parents feel comfortable letting their children walk to and from school, which contributes to very high rates of absenteeism.

It is clear that to stabilize the neighborhood and make it attractive to new residents and visitors, every effort must be made to improve the sense of safety. This includes the design of the reimagined Donnelly Homes so that eyes are oriented to the street and public and private areas are clearly distinguished. Lighting on site at Donnelly Homes and throughout the neighborhood must be enhanced, as well as traffic calming, and stronger collaboration and transparency has to happen with the local police.

“Do you feel safe in Donnelly Homes?”



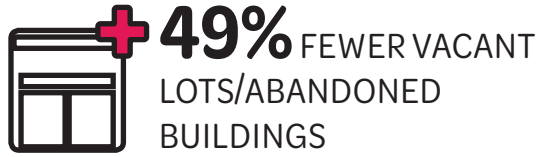
**77%** feel crime and safety is the neighborhood's biggest challenge

“Is it safe for children to walk and play outside?”



only **14%** feel it is safe for children to walk to & home from school

“What would make the neighborhood feel safer?”



SOURCE: HUD MAPPING TOOL



SOURCE: ESRI

**46%** OF RESIDENTS WOULD LIKE TO WORK TOWARDS OWNING THEIR OWN HOME



**BLIGHT AND VACANT/ABANDONED BUILDINGS AND LOTS**

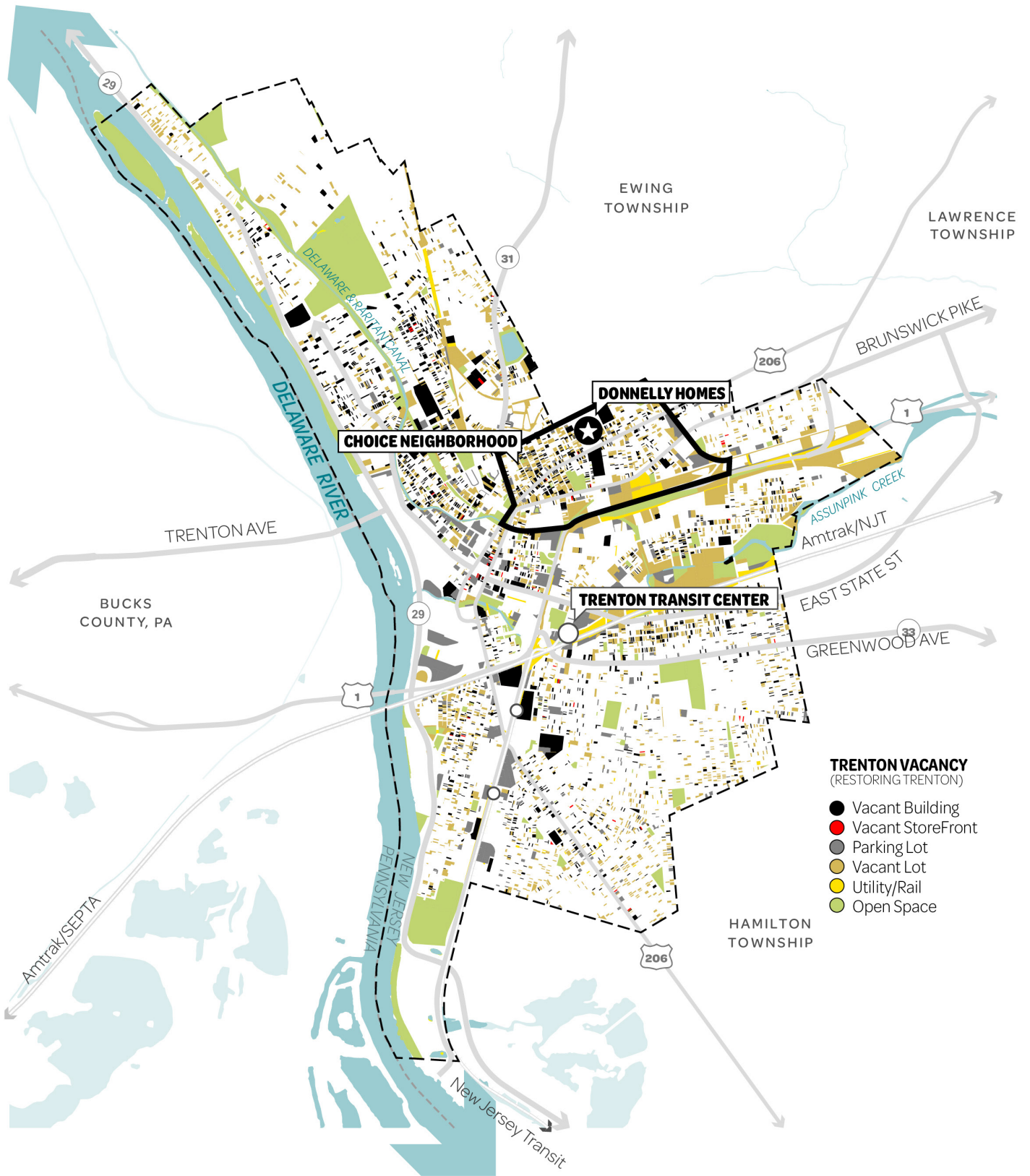
Widespread blight and vacancies also go hand in hand with discussions of the Choice neighborhood, housing, and crime. Residents are frustrated and unnerved by the condition of the day to day living environment, which seems to attract and promote troublesome behavior. Abandoned buildings and vacant lots were among the top three safety concerns of Needs Assessment Survey takers along with gun violence and gang activity. But there is also great interest in reusing these sites as public gardens, play spaces, dog parks, and picnic areas.

**WEALTH BUILDING**

It is not surprising that with a high rate of poverty in the Choice neighborhood (40%), the rate of homeownership is low (25.3%). Homeownership stabilizes neighborhoods as owners generally want to care for and protect their investments. Homeownership also provides a path to build wealth and pass it along to subsequent generations. There is a strong interest among Donnelly Homes residents who participated in the Needs Assessment to work towards buying a home, which could go hand-in-hand with efforts to stabilize the Choice neighborhood and increase resident incomes by creating more opportunities for homeownership.

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

Along with the strong ties of community, a sense of “pride in where we reside,” and a desire to empower residents through redevelopment is a plea for a civic engagement framework. Housing Task Force discussions have centered around overlapping goals of building trust, and creating opportunities for children and young adults to learn leadership skills through mentors and intergenerational activities. There is an overwhelming interest in giving youth the belief and confidence that they can



^ **FIGURE 24. TRENTON VACANCY MAP**

SOURCE: 2019 RESTORING TRENTON

be the change they want to see and that coming together and building on the community's assets and strengths is the way to build community wealth.

## **TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES**

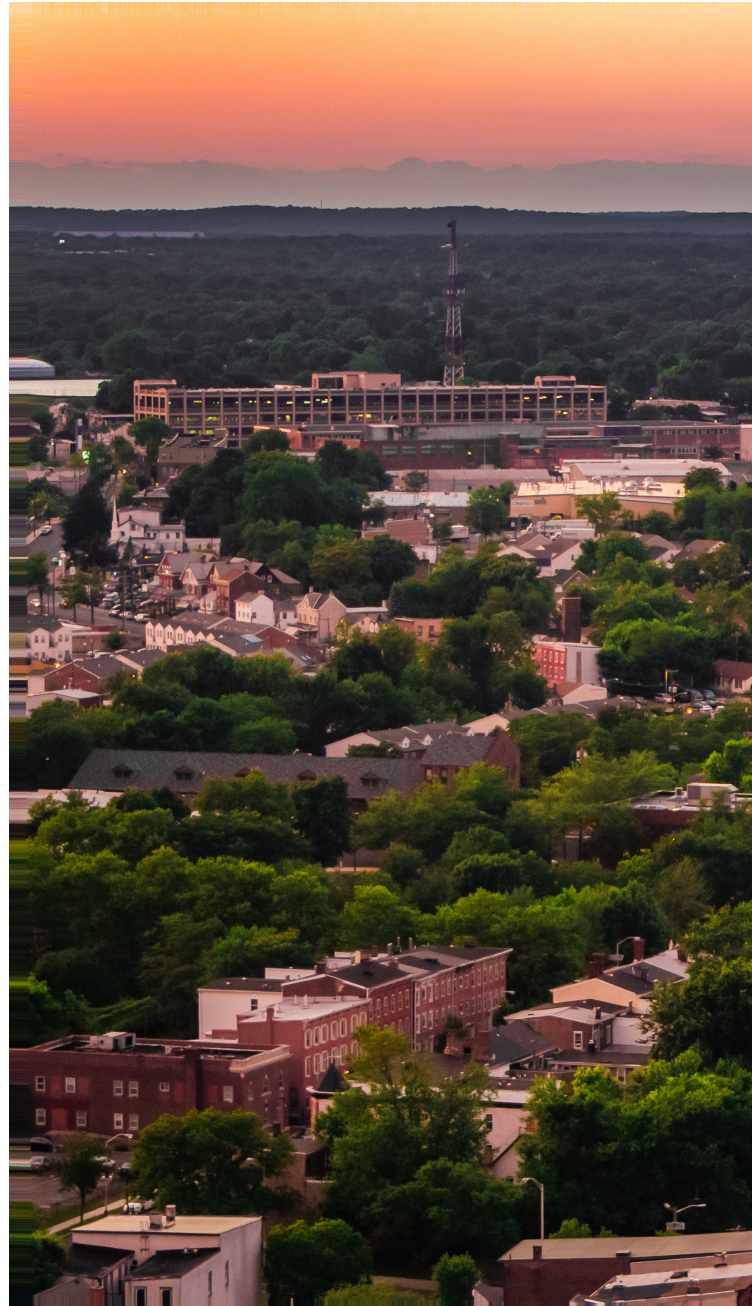
### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Based on findings from the Needs Assessment, discussions during Task Force Meetings, and feedback gathered through special events, the Housing Task Force has to put together a set of preliminary Guiding Principles for the Housing Plan.

- 1.** Demonstrate positive change and build trust.
- 2.** Cultivate civic engagement.
- 3.** Foster intergenerational living and youth leadership by listening first.
- 4.** Build on area assets and the sense of community.
- 5.** Build wealth.
- 6.** Create a safe place.

The Housing component of the Choice Neighborhood Plan responds to residents' desires by focusing on three main goals:

- 1.** Reimagine Donnelly Homes as a safe, vibrant, mixed-income intergenerational community that anchors North Trenton with a strong sense of civic engagement.
- 2.** Stabilize North Trenton through strategic demolition and investments in infill development.
- 3.** Provide opportunities to build community wealth and prosperity.





## PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

The Housing Task Force has just started developing potential strategies and an overarching vision for the Housing Plan, which are outlined below. These will continue to be refined, added to, and prioritized in the coming months during Task Force Meetings and at special events for residents of Donnelly Homes and the neighborhood.

### **GOAL 1: REIMAGINE DONNELLY HOMES AS A SAFE, VIBRANT, MIXED-INCOME INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY THAT ANCHORS NORTH TRENTON WITH A STRONG SENSE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT.**

- A.** Redesign Donnelly Homes so that it is more integrated with the street grid and orient buildings to the street to support safety.
- B.** Clearly define public and private spaces to protect safety of residents.
- C.** Create indoor and outdoor gathering spaces to foster a sense of community.
- D.** Design Donnelly Homes so that it is well-lit and comfortable for walking.

### **GOAL 2: STABILIZE NORTH TRENTON THROUGH STRATEGIC DEMOLITION AND INVESTMENTS IN INFILL DEVELOPMENT.**

- A.** Identify key opportunity sites that can be used for new infill housing (including affordable rentals and homeownership). Prioritize locations along main corridors and highly visible streets such as MLK Boulevard for early rounds of implementation.
- B.** Work with Trenton Historical Society to identify historic structures that should be preserved and restored.
- C.** Set up a Home Improvement Program for local homeowners so they can make necessary improvements to their homes.
- D.** Implement an incentive program to encourage state employees to rent or own homes in the neighborhood.
- E.** Establish a neighborhood-based construction incubator to train local residents and as serve as a network to promote locally-based contractors to perform building improvements.

### **GOAL 3: PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD COMMUNITY WEALTH AND PROSPERITY.**

- A.** Identify existing neighborhood homes that could be renovated by local contractors and identified for first-time homeowners.
- B.** Build awareness of THA's new FSS program to assist Donnelly Homes residents work towards buying a home (with programs for credit repair, balancing finances, job placement, etc.)
- C.** Explore a program that would allow participants to move from renting to owning a property.
- D.** Partner with neighborhood anchors to invest locally in redevelopment.



## DEVELOPING THE PEOPLE STORY

The people of Donnelly Homes and the North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood are what make the neighborhood and homes come to life, and they are a vibrant, proud, and vocal group. Although the housing and neighborhood may not look like much from the outside, talking with and learning about the people of this neighborhood reveal a tightly knit community of new and long-term residents dedicated to improving their homes and lives, and to making those improvements happen.

In particular, the three areas that the People Plan focuses on—Health, Employment, and Education—are recognized as the key factors necessary to push and pull this neighborhood forward. Combining information gathered from the Needs Assessment Survey, task force meetings, and conversations with residents and neighbors, the most pressing and potentially transformative goals and strategies are outlined below.

It is important to note, however, the overlap among the People, Neighborhood, and Housing plans, particularly when it comes to Public Safety and Civic Engagement. As noted in the Housing Plan section, these two issues—improving public safety in and around Donnelly Homes, and empowering residents through civic engagement knowledge and skill development—were common threads throughout discussions of all People, Neighborhood, and Housing. They are included in the Housing section, but tie the entire plan together.

## WHAT WE HAVE HEARD SO FAR

### HEALTH

Health is a priority for Donnelly Homes and North Trenton / Battle Monument residents. Ninety two percent of survey respondents have health insurance, 90 percent of residents have had an annual wellness check-up, and 84 percent of responding residents have had a dental cleaning in the past year.

Donnelly Homes residents take their health seriously, and are committed to maintaining and improving their individual and community health, however, residents perceive multiple barriers to wellness. They worry that not enough places are available for recreation and exercise, and that public safety concerns prevent them from utilizing what outdoor and public resources are readily available. They want greater access to affordable, healthy food, and they want younger generations to learn and practice the skills of healthy food selection and preparation.

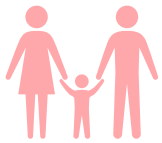
Given the reality and perception of Donnelly Homes and the surrounding neighborhood as unsafe, and that many residents of Donnelly Homes and the neighborhood have witnessed or experienced violence, residents want to see greater access to and utilization of mental health resources, on both individual and group levels. In addition, residents are aware of the health care assets present in the neighborhood, but need greater access to care, including transportation and availability of specialty providers.

Finally, many residents expressed concern about the confusing nature of health insurance, and difficulty in knowing what services are available to them, what services are covered, what providers would be covered by their insurance, and how to enroll in appropriate insurance plans. A real need exists for support in navigating and understanding health insurance, coverage, and covered care.

## Do you have health insurance?



**92%** have health insurance **FOR THEMSELVES**



**87% OF ALL ADULTS** in households have health insurance

**91%** of households **WITH CHILDREN** have health insurance

## What are the main reason members of your household don't have health insurance?



**#1** COST



**#2** DIFFICULTY BEING APPROVED



**#3** UNSURE OF HOW TO GET INSURANCE



### Things that are good:

- Availability and affordability of high-quality fresh fruits and vegetables
- Several affordable healthcare facilities nearby



### Things that can improve:

- Places to exercise (gyms, parks, playgrounds)
- Walking in the neighborhood
- Safety
- Cleanliness
- Air quality
- Green spaces and trees throughout

### What would make it easier for people to exercise in the neighborhood?

- 68%** GYM/INDOOR FITNESS
- 55%** GREATER FEELING OF SAFETY TO BE ABLE TO WALK OR JOG

## How could your access to quality healthcare be improved?

# OF RESPONDENTS



**#1**  
**LOCATING MORE HEALTHCARE FACILITIES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

**#2**  
**EMPLOYING STAFF AT HEALTHCARE FACILITIES WHO UNDERSTAND ME, ARE CULTURALLY COMPETENT AND SENSITIVE TO MY CIRCUMSTANCES/HISTORY**

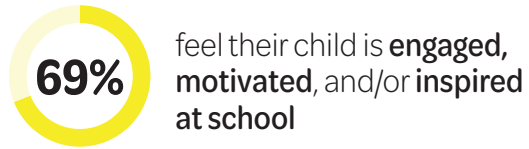
**#3**  
**PROVIDING A SHUTTLE TO MAJOR MEDICAL FACILITIES**

**#4**  
**EXTENDING THE HOURS OF HEALTH-RELATED FACILITIES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD**

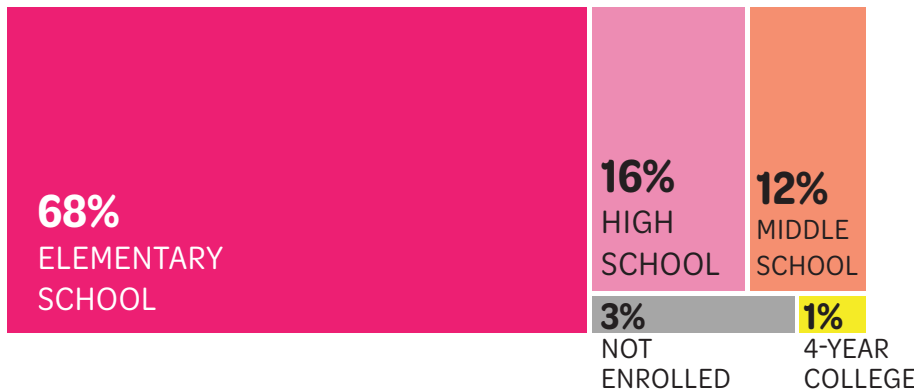
PROVIDING MORE SERVICES

OTHER

## Quality of Education:



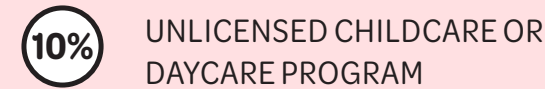
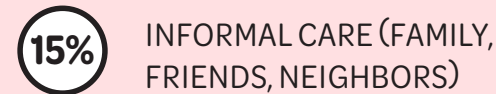
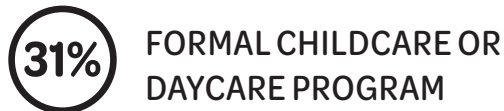
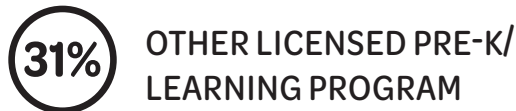
## School enrollment for children aged 5-19



## Is school preparing children to meet their expectations?



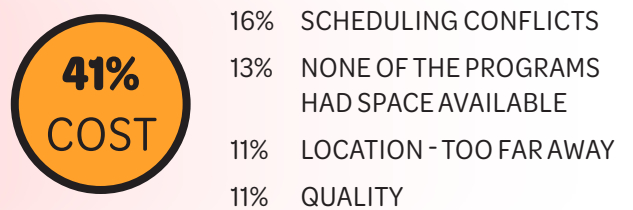
## Head Start / Early Childhood Learning Program Enrollment:



## What additional services would help children do well in school?

- SUMMER PROGRAMS
- HOMEWORK CLUB ON-SITE AT DONNELLY HOMES
- INDIVIDUAL TUTORING
- ADDITIONAL AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING
- BEHAVIORAL COUNSELING

## Reasons why children do not attend an early childhood learning program?



## EDUCATION

Donnelly Homes residents recognize that education is essential for the success of people of all ages. With children under the age of 19 in approximately 62 percent of households at Donnelly Homes, residents are passionate about finding ways to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for their families. Only 63 percent of survey respondents feel their children receive a high-quality education at school, and only 58 percent believe that school is preparing their children to meet their expectations. Although they recognize the limitations that their current schooling opportunities provide for their families, they are committed to finding ways to improve and further these opportunities.

Early childhood education and access to childcare were identified as key areas of concern for residents. Childcare is too expensive for many, and almost all the residents know of someone who has opted to stay home with a child instead of work due to childcare costs. Childcare is also not perceived as readily available in the neighborhood, creating a vicious circle that prevents parents who might want to work and advance their careers from entering the job market.

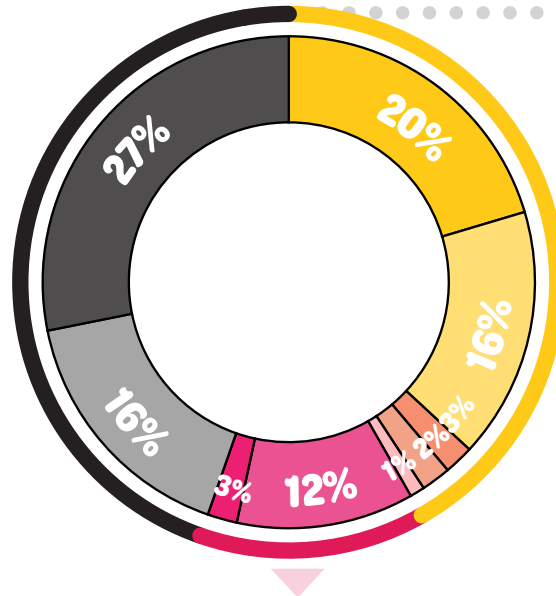
A common refrain from residents has also been about parent engagement: successful kids have parents who are engaged with their children's education, but many parents lack the resources, background, or education to support their children effectively. There is a great need for programs to prepare and support adults to be able to help their children succeed in school, and to communicate the importance of attending and completing their primary and secondary education. Generational trauma stemming from bad educational experiences while growing up was also cited as a significant obstacle, causing many parents to hesitate to push their own children through school. Yet many parents, residents, and partners see

the potential and importance of having the local schools serve as an essential resource for the broader community. North Trenton has two public schools—MLK Elementary and Rivera Community Middle School—which serve many of the area's children. The schools are seen as an untapped opportunity for community spaces and activities, as well as consistent after-school programming.

Additional concerns were raised around the safety of schools, both inside the buildings and going to and from school. The perception of the schools is that they are unsafe, either internally due to bullying and gang activity, or from external sources such as lockdowns and unsubstantiated bomb threats. As a consequence, and related to the health concerns expressed above, nearly all students are witnesses or survivors of violence and have dramatic mental health needs that prevent them from thriving in school and being college- or career-ready, let alone graduating. Despite these challenges, the schools are still viewed positively for their potential to provide education, umbrage, stability, career opportunities, life and emotional support for the students, their families, and community as a whole.

## Current Employment Status:

- EMPLOYED, FULL-TIME
- EMPLOYED, PART-TIME
- EMPLOYED, TEMP/SEASONAL
- EMPLOYED, MULTIPLE JOBS
- EMPLOYED, PART-TIME & LOOKING FOR FULL-TIME WORK
- UNEMPLOYED, LOOKING FOR A JOB
- UNEMPLOYED, NOT LOOKING FOR A JOB
- RETIRED
- UNABLE TO WORK



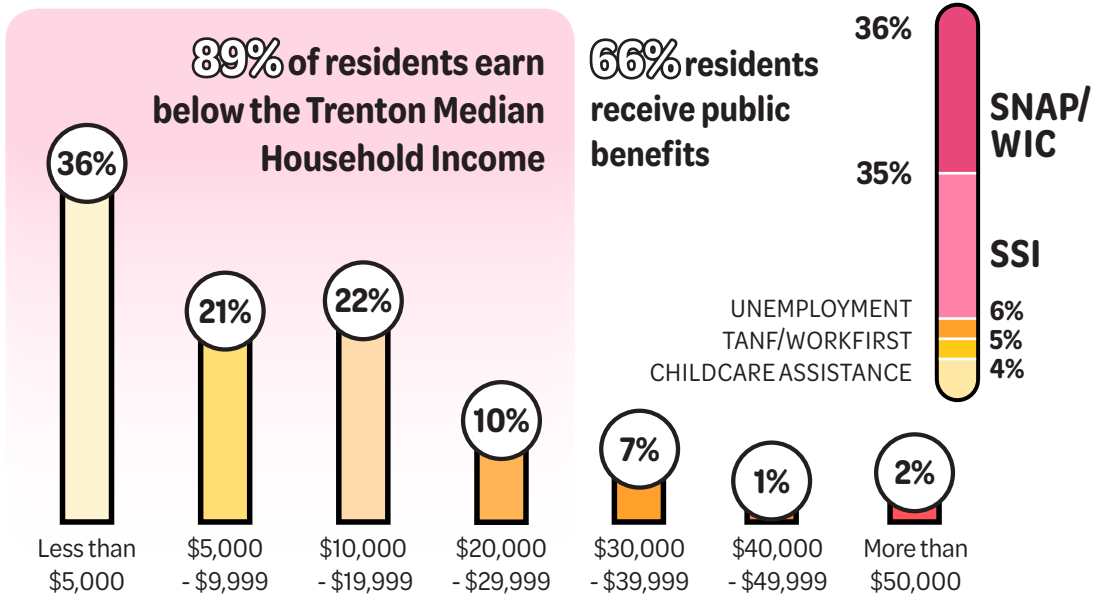
**43%** OF RESIDENTS ARE **RETIRED OR UNABLE TO WORK**

**42%** OF RESIDENTS ARE **EMPLOYED**, AT LEAST PART TIME

of those employed, **only 13%** are employed by the State of New Jersey

**and 13%** are contract employees for the State

**15%** OF RESIDENTS ARE **UNEMPLOYED**

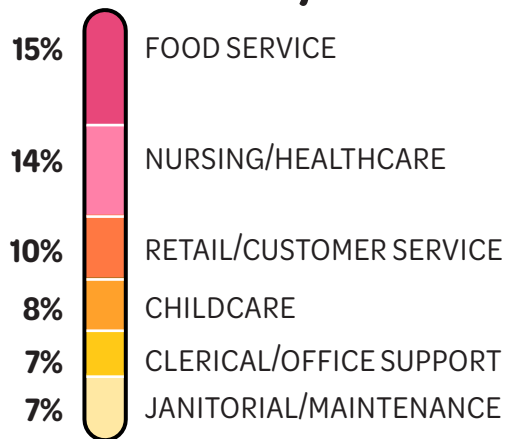


## Overall job satisfaction is relatively low.



- 36%** ARE **SATISFIED** WITH THEIR JOBS
- 39%** FIND THEIR WORK **FULFILLING**
- 29%** HAVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR **ADVANCEMENT & PROFESSIONAL GROWTH**
- 21%** HAVE JOBS THAT **MEET THEIR FINANCIAL NEEDS**

## In what sector do you work?



## EMPLOYMENT

Residents of the North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood are challenged when seeking out meaningful and livable employment opportunities. Few well-paying positions are available to residents without credentials or certifications, and no major employment hubs exist within the boundaries of the neighborhood. However, as the state capital and county seat, and with a robust health care and education industry, jobs are available nearby. One challenge is the mismatch between the skills of Donnelly Homes and neighborhood residents and the requirements of existing jobs. Overcoming criminal records is also an issue for many.

Of the 57 percent of Donnelly Homes survey respondents who are able to work, more than a quarter of them are unemployed, many of whom see no immediate prospects for work and are not enrolled in school or job training. Only 7 percent work in the neighborhood, and just over half (55 percent) work in the city of Trenton. Eighty-nine percent of survey respondents earn less than the Trenton median household income (approximately \$30,000), which is less than half of the county median income (approximately \$78,000). Job satisfaction is, not surprisingly, quite low.

However, residents have been clear about their priorities for improving this situation: support local small business development, provide clear pathways and models for youth and returning residents, and match skills and training with local jobs and employers. These themes repeatedly surfaced in our discussions and surveys, and a clear commitment to the resources and assets present at Donnelly Homes and in the neighborhood—mainly, the innovative, entrepreneurial, and proud people who live here—was evident in discussions about moving this community forward.

**TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES: PEOPLE PLAN VISION AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES**

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Building on this initial snapshot, the People Task Force proposes the following potential strategies and an overarching vision for the People Plan, which are outlined below. These will continue to be refined, added to, and prioritized in the coming months during Task Force Meetings and at special events for residents of Donnelly Homes and the neighborhood.

**GUIDING VISION**

As a result of the Choice Neighborhood Plan, people in our community will be able to:

- ▶ Live healthy lives, maintain their health, and live, work, and play in healthy, safe places in and around their homes
- ▶ Engage in and value an education that prepares children and their families for life-long success
- ▶ Work and build wealth locally through fulfilling employment with livable wages
- ▶ Shape and influence their communities through active, informed civic engagement

**PRELIMINARY VISIONS, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES**

**HEALTH VISION: LIVE HEALTHY LIVES, MAINTAIN THEIR HEALTH, AND LIVE, WORK, AND PLAY IN HEALTHY, SAFE PLACES IN AND AROUND THEIR HOMES**

**GOAL 1: IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES, WITH A FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH AND SPECIALTY PROVIDERS**

- A. Have on-site mental health support for residents.
- B. Create crisis/violence mental health response team.
- C. Provide transportation to health care providers.
- D. Compile and communicate about available health care providers in neighborhood and nearby, including dental, eye, ob/gyn.
- E. Strategy 5: Partner with schools and other organizations to distribute appropriate and accurate reproductive health information.

**GOAL 2: INCREASE ACCESS TO AND UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE .**

- A. Have health insurance navigators available to support residents during and after open enrollment.
- B. Have health insurance advocates available to residents when seeking health care.

**GOAL 3: INCREASE ACCESS TO RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.**

- A. Build playground at Donnelly Homes.
- B. Strategy 2: Enhance connections to the local trail network (D&R Canal).
- C. Create safe walking routes and club.
- D. Create bike rental/bikeshare program.
- E. Create fitness center at/near Donnelly Homes.

**GOAL 4: INCREASE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AROUND HEALTHY FOOD SELECTION AND PREPARATION.**

- A. Strategy 1: Host healthy eating and cooking classes on site.

- B.** Have a nutritionist available for appointments.
- C.** Host a farmers market at or near Donnelly Homes.
- D.** Establish a community garden at Donnelly Homes.

**EMPLOYMENT VISION: WORK AND BUILD WEALTH LOCALLY THROUGH FULFILLING EMPLOYMENT WITH LIVABLE WAGES.**

**GOAL 1: PROVIDE AND PLAN FOR TRAINING FOR LOCALLY- AND REGIONALLY-IN-DEMAND EMPLOYMENT.**

- A.** Convene local businesses to identify opportunities for local employment, re-entry employment, and skills development opportunities.
- B.** Increase number of Donnelly Homes residents participating in OneStop and MCCC trainings and certifications.
- C.** Get businesses to hire local entry-level employees and support their professional development.
- D.** Expose youth and residents to potential career paths and host local 'success stories' to provide positive, relatable examples.

**GOAL 2: SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH OF LOCAL SMALL BUSINESSES.**

- A.** Provide business planning and implementation workshops and trainings.
- B.** Develop capital lending pool for start-ups and small businesses.
- C.** Provide one-on-one counseling and support for existing small businesses.
- D.** Develop incentive program to activate vacant storefronts for small businesses and start-ups.

**GOAL 3: EXPAND RE-ENTRY EMPLOYMENT TRAINING, PLACEMENT, AND SUPPORT**

- A.** Host expungement workshops on site.
- B.** Expand partnerships with local organizations (the Father Center, A Better Way) to provide tailored job placement support for formerly incarcerated individuals.
- C.** Identify businesses willing to hire formerly incarcerated individuals and create a council/group of them to create relationships and pipeline.

**EDUCATION VISION: ENGAGE IN AND VALUE AN EDUCATION THAT PREPARES CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES FOR LIFE-LONG SUCCESS.**

**GOAL 1: INCREASE AND IMPROVE PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION.**

- A.** Implement a Parent University or Parent Ambassador program in partnership with MLK Elementary and Rivera Middle School.
- B.** Expand tutoring and homework support at Donnelly Homes and/or the schools.
- C.** Communicate value and necessity of education through a messaging campaign and community events held at the schools.

**GOAL 2: INCREASE SAFETY AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE OR WITNESS TRAUMA.**

- A.** Enhance and expand mental health resources for residents and students at schools.
- B.** Create Safe Routes to School throughout neighborhood.
- C.** Create mental health response team.

**GOAL 3: INCREASE ACCESS TO AND AWARENESS OF AFFORDABLE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND DAYCARE.**

- A.** Create additional early childhood education and/or childcare center at or immediately adjacent to Donnelly Homes.
- B.** Communicate available resources and importance of early childhood education.

**GOAL 4: EXPAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL MODEL AND RELATED SUPPORT SERVICES.**

- A.** Increase community activities and programming at school.
- B.** Increase organizations and services available through local schools.

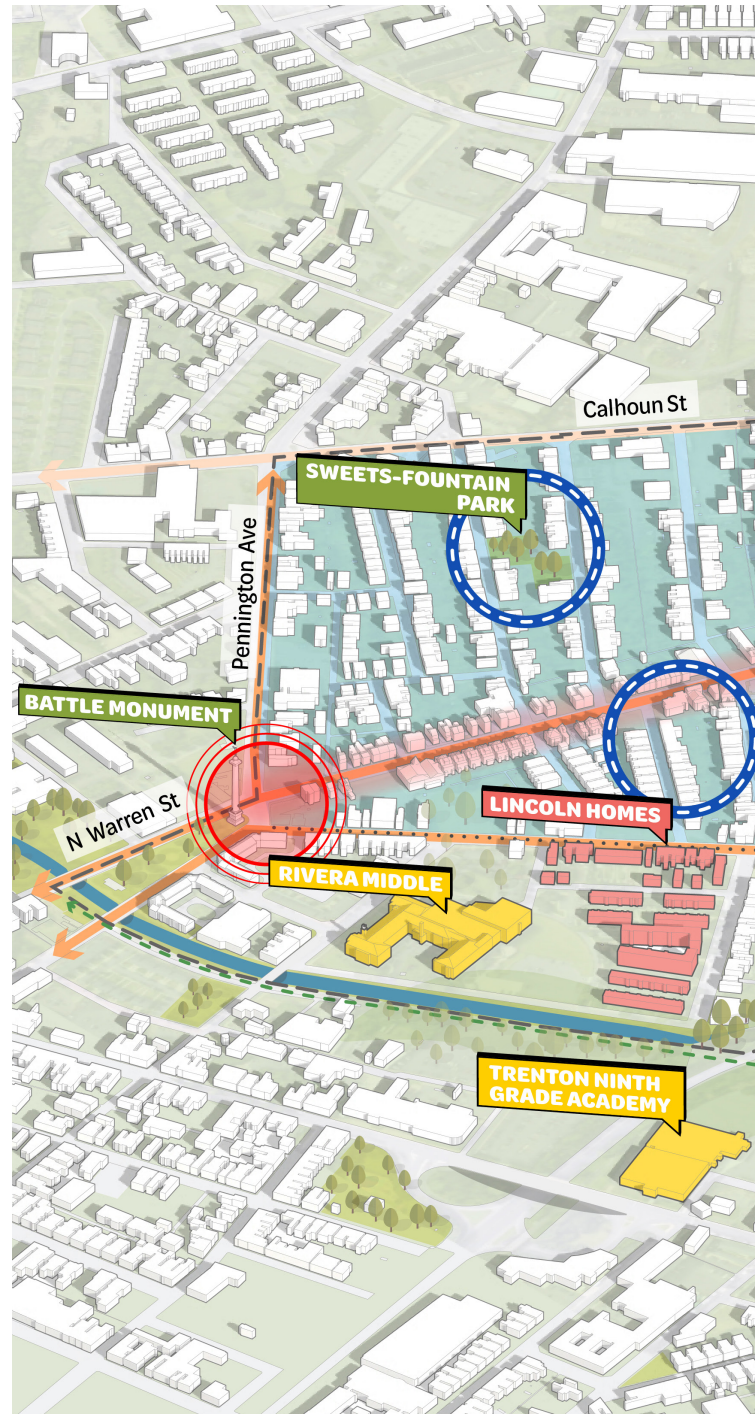
## DEVELOPING THE NEIGHBORHOOD STORY

The fundamental principles of good urban design are not new. Analysis of the North Trenton / Battle Monument neighborhood shows that the community has all of the basic building blocks in place—tree-lined streets organized in a walkable grid, housing of different types and sizes, a mix of uses with schools, a hospital, churches, parks, and a handful of stores, as well as public transportation, and potential employment nearby.

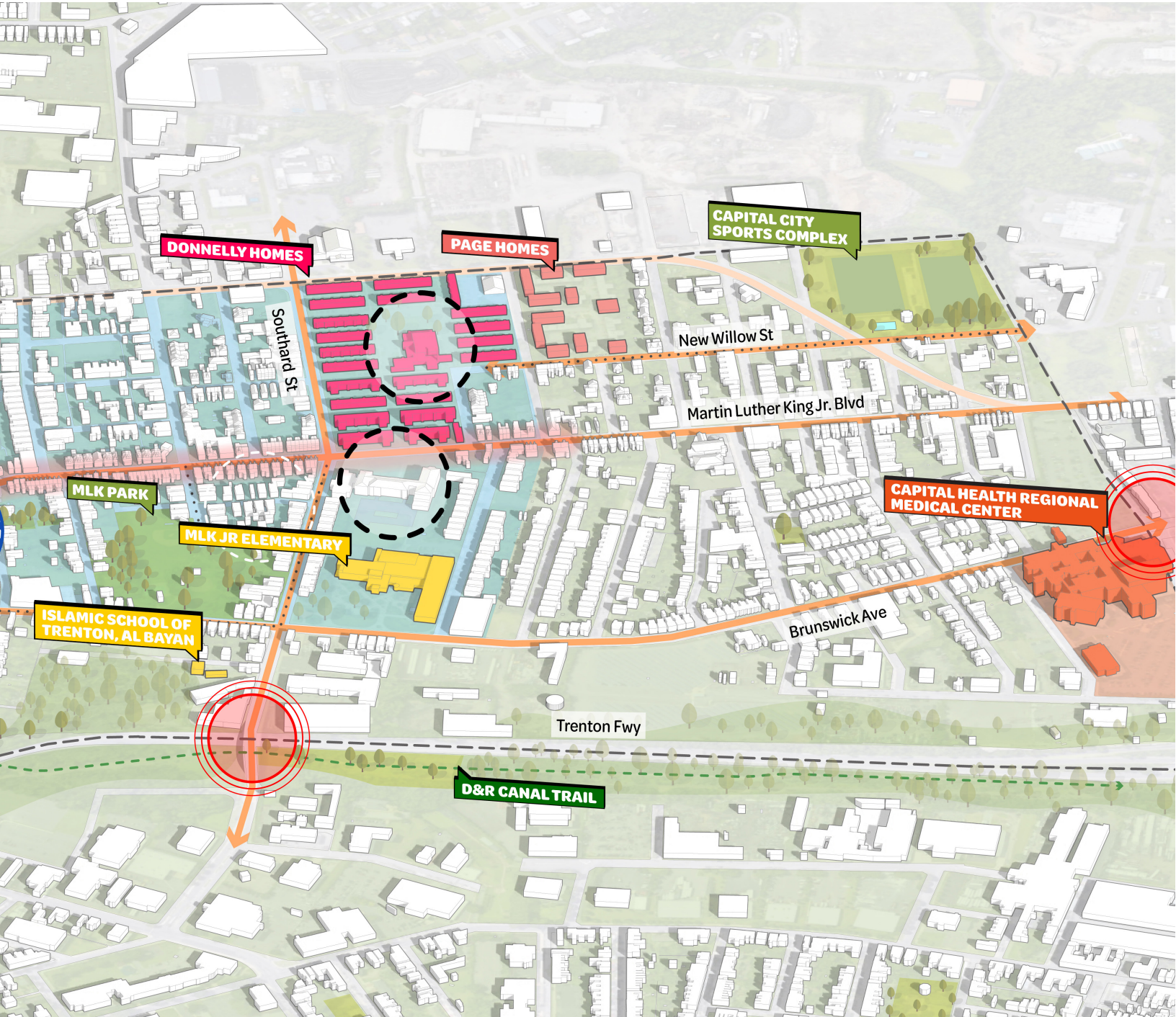
The Neighborhood Plan builds on these strengths and strives to turn many of the existing challenges—widespread vacancies, blight, unsafe streets—into opportunities. Thinking about the Neighborhood Plan is like thinking about the glue that holds everything and everyone together. It forms a backbone or framework for a community to blossom.

Because vacancies and blight impact nearly every block in the Choice neighborhood, the challenge will be to focus our efforts on highly visible locations to begin to demonstrate that change is happening. We will also identify additional focus areas for subsequent redevelopment that can continue to build on the momentum, through both public and private investment.

As you can see on the Opportunities Diagram at right, MLK Boulevard is a main artery that runs through the center of the neighborhood into the heart of Downtown Trenton. The scale, appearance, and mix of small businesses makes it a natural main street ripe for reinvestment. The significant street frontage of Donnelly Homes running along MLK Boulevard offers a timely opportunity to redesign the site’s relationship to the street. The beautiful historic Junior 1 Middle School building sits vacant directly across the street, overlooking a long stretch of MLK Boulevard that is also calling out for reuse,



^ **FIGURE 25. NEIGHBORHOOD OPPORTUNITIES**



**LEGEND**

- ⊙
NEIGHBORHOOD GATEWAY
➔
ENHANCED STREETSCAPE FOR BIKES/PEDESTRIANS
- ANCHOR ASSETS
⋯
SAFE ROUTES
- REDEVELOPMENT FOCUS AREA

FOCUSED COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY
- INFILL DEVELOPMENT AREA

## What stores & services are available within walking distance of your home?

The majority of residents get their basic shopping needs from:



- ShopRite (in Ewing)
- Walmart (in Hamilton)
- Capital Plaza

LAUNDROMAT / DRY CLEANERS  
PERSONAL CARE SERVICES  
GROCERY STORES



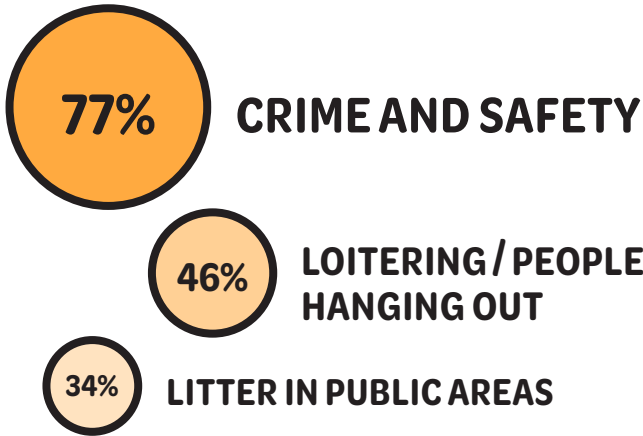
RESTAURANTS AND CAFES  
PHARMACY  
GENERAL STORES  
CLOTHING STORES  
GROCERY STORES  
BANKING



QUALITY, AFFORDABLE  
CHILDCARE



## What are the neighborhood's biggest challenges?



**13%** of residents feel this is a great neighborhood or that it is clean

## Missing activities / organizations in the neighborhood:



**48% LIBRARY OR READING ROOM**



**48% CENTRAL GATHERING PLACE**



**28% COMMUNITY GARDEN / GARDEN PLOTS**

**40%** do not have enough food more than once a week

### because:

- CANNOT AFFORD IT
- DIFFICULT TO GET TO STORE
- TOO BUSY
- FOOD STAMPS RUN OUT
- COVID19

particularly more active uses to put more “eyes on the street” and support a safer and more vibrant street life.

Since the Choice neighborhood has many community anchors like MLK Jr. Elementary School, Rivera Middle School, the Capital Health Regional Medical Center, MLK Park, the Capital Sports Complex, and Battle Monument, the neighborhood plan will focus on enhancing connections to these facilities. This includes establishing safe routes to the schools, improved lighting, clear sightlines, cleaning and greening of vacant lots, and infill development to replace missing “teeth” and reduce dark, untended spaces.

The plan will also build on pockets of stability including THA’s new Turner Pointe Homes and the Humboldt-Sweets area, roughly bordered by Pennington Avenue, Calhoun Street, MLK Boulevard, and Southard Street. Another area of potential for concentrated investment is a cluster of vacant buildings and lots located near the Battle Monument between MLK Boulevard and Brunswick Avenue extending up to the Junior 1 site. Improvements would strengthen and clarify the identity of the Brunswick Avenue corridor from North Broad Street to Southard Street.

## GUIDING VISION

Donnelly Homes residents would like this neighborhood to be known as a safe, stable, and family-friendly neighborhood that is a thriving center of Black and African American culture.

## SUMMARY OF KEY OPPORTUNITIES

To maximize every available effort and dollar of investment, the Neighborhood Plan will focus on a few key opportunities with goals and strategies that compliment and reinforce one another as well as the Housing and People plan goals. These include:

- **Commercial Corridors and Amenities:** Strengthening, restoring, and concentrating activity and investment along the main commercial corridors to provide some critical mass of much-needed services and things to do for residents and visitors of all ages.
- **Character and Image:** Building on the rich history, culture, and strong sense of community to distinguish the neighborhood and raise its profile as a welcoming place to live and interesting place to visit.
- **Real Estate:** Reducing blight and vacancies through targeted infill and cleaning and greening.
- **Infrastructure and Services:** Improving connections to existing assets, services, and amenities so that people can reach them safely at any time of day—including sidewalks, bus routes, and traffic patterns.
- **Healthy Living:** Creating a healthy community with safe spaces to walk, bike, and exercise and easy access to fresh, affordable food and medical services.
- **Public Safety:** Increasing everyone’s safety using a variety of tools including physical design improvements, lighting, traffic calming, community conversations with the police, and a neighborhood watch.



## **NEIGHBORHOOD GOALS & STRATEGIES**

**GOAL 1: FOCUS REDEVELOPMENT EFFORTS ON MLK BOULEVARD AND THE STRETCH OF BRUNSWICK AVENUE THAT CONNECTS BATTLE MONUMENT TO MLK PARK, POOL, AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SO THESE CAN EXEMPLIFY THE LEGACY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. AND BECOME A FOCAL POINT OF ACTIVITY FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD WITH NEW BUSINESSES, RESTAURANTS, HOUSING, AND INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES.**

- A.** Work with the Minority Chamber of Commerce to develop a coordinated business attraction strategy.
- B.** Establish a local business incubator that nurtures entrepreneurs and provides micro loans and grant money for small diverse businesses with programming, mentorships, and youth programs.
- C.** Expand an existing or designate a new Redevelopment Area that encompasses the Choice Neighborhood to actively attract investment.
- D.** Review and update existing zoning and future land use so that it encourages commercial activity along MLK Boulevard.
- E.** Establish a streetscaping and beautification program to clean and enhance the appearance of MLK Boulevard.
- F.** Promote the City's storefront improvement program that provides funding for façade improvements for businesses.
- G.** Redesign and reorient the Donnelly Homes site so that it embraces MLK Boulevard and activates the street life.
- H.** Create a community-driven plan to adaptively reuse Junior 1 Middle School as a mixed-use development.



## GOAL 2: STOP THE SPREAD OF BLIGHT AND VACANCIES.

- A. Establish a program to assist homeowners with necessary repairs and a network of qualified local contractors.
- B. Explore the feasibility of a collective investing and capacity building model like Jumpstart Germantown that would leverage public ownership of vacant properties to help residents gain equity in real estate development, build wealth, and gain valuable skills while improving properties in the community.
- C. Identify XX number of vacant lots for the Adopt-A-Lot and Clean and Green program to demonstrate that they are watched, secured, and maintained, beginning with main corridors.
- D. Promote infill housing and new commercial development to fill in the missing “teeth” particularly along main arteries and highly visible locations like MLK Boulevard.
- E. Educate property owners about their responsibilities and push for stricter code enforcement.
- F. Work with active churches and institutional anchors (Gallilee, Wayne Ave, Other?) to invest in and support the community through co-development.
- G. Set up a joint task force between Trenton and Ewing Department of Public Works.



## GOAL 3: DISTINGUISH THE AREA'S IDENTITY AND CHARACTER BY CELEBRATING THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S LAYERED HISTORY AND DEEP SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

- A. Integrate a variety of safe, programmed gathering spaces—large and small—on-site at Donnelly Homes and throughout the neighborhood to encourage social interaction. These could be vacant lots or small spaces in parks or at churches that are transformed into pocket parks, seating areas with benches, or a small plaza with game tables.
- B. Establish a library space either on-site at Donnelly Homes or nearby that also serves as a community hub.
- C. Nurture local arts, culture, music through programming, events (street art, hip hop, garden competitions) and flex space with stage space and a recording studio.
- D. Create the financial and technical assistance tools needed to support investment in historic properties.
- E. Enhance gateways or main streetscapes with signage, art, and/or landscaping that reflects the neighborhood's culture and history.



**GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN AND IMPROVE THE PHYSICAL CONNECTIONS TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S MAJOR ASSETS AND AMENITIES.**

- A.** Secure funding to implement Safe Routes to Schools improvements along main routes to both MLK Elementary and Rivera Middle School. Also set up a walking school bus from Donnelly Homes to both schools.
- B.** Implement traffic calming and well-marked crosswalks along streets leading to the schools, parks, Capital Health Medical Complex, and commercial corridors.
- C.** Encourage infill development, and cleaning and greening of vacant lots along primary streets leading to schools, parks, commercial corridors.
- D.** Trim trees and shrubs at entrances to and within parks so there are clear lines of sight across the parks.
- E.** Prioritize implementation of "Complete Streets" along MLK Boulevard, to the schools, and to the Delaware & Raritan Canal Trail that is part of the East Coast Greenway.
- F.** Work with NJ Transit to develop a more comprehensive design for bus stops including lighting and shelter, and seating.



**GOAL 5: CREATE A COMMUNITY THAT ENCOURAGES HEALTHY LIVING BY MAKING IT EASY TO EXERCISE, EAT WELL, AND ACCESS SERVICES TO HEAL THE MIND AND BODY.**

- A.** Expand on Trenton Health Team's Safe & Healthy Corridor along Brunswick Avenue to the broader Choice neighborhood.
- B.** Create a new playground either at Donnelly Homes or nearby that integrates playful learning landscapes.
- C.** Host a regular farm stand on site at Donnelly Homes.
- D.** Establish a community garden at Donnelly Homes.
- E.** Set up a bike share/rental program and bike storage on site at Donnelly Homes.
- F.** Host nutrition and healthy cooking workshops on site at Donnelly Homes.
- G.** Work with local schools to build on and expand existing programs to help youth deal with trauma.



**GOAL 6: INCREASE PUBLIC SAFETY THROUGH A COORDINATED APPROACH BUILT ON TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY, COLLABORATION, AND SUPPORTED BY PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS.**

- A.** Restore a sense of accountability, transparency, and trust between the community and the police starting with monthly Meet & Greets or coffee hours where residents and the police can talk about issues of concern and work together constructively to develop solutions.
- B.** Collaborate with the Trenton Police Department to explore options such as foot patrol and a beat cop to improve the relationship between the community and TPD.
- C.** Redesign Donnelly Homes to promote safety and visibility, and clearly define public and private spaces. Orient the buildings to overlook walkways and common spaces (placing more “eyes on the street”). Carefully integrate pedestrian and site lighting, and encourage activity through activated spaces such as playgrounds, picnic/BBQ areas, and gardens.
- D.** Reestablish a local Police Athletic League.
- E.** Secure funding to organize and support a neighborhood watch program.
- F.** Review draft LDO to ensure that lighting standards work for the neighborhood.
- G.** Require that all new neighborhood development complies with LDO for lighting standards and ensure long-term maintenance.
- H.** Broaden civic engagement opportunities, including a leadership program for adults and youth.
- I.** Create safe, supportive peer-to-peer programs that meaningfully address grief and loss and encourage trauma-informed healing and reconciliation for community members impacted by past gang violence and ongoing territorial ward identities.
- J.** Establish and increase awareness of alternatives to reporting incidents through the police for mental health crises and disruptive behavior that can be managed by other trained professionals like social workers, healthcare providers, and community organizations.

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**05/**

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**IMPLEMENTATION**





# 05/ IMPLEMENTATION

**It’s exciting to dream of the possibilities; to imagine what could be if a few major changes were made; to think what could happen if ideas, passion, partners and funding could all fall into place.**

**Our intent is to turn our ideas into reality. The goals we are setting and strategies we are developing for the Choice Neighborhood Plan already have roots or some momentum or interest behind them. Many services and resources already exist. The challenge will be to fine tune them or bring awareness of them to residents or make it easier to take advantage of them. Practical yet aspirational, our goals and strategies will be implementable and our progress will be clearly measured.**

## EARLY ACTION ACTIVITIES

Change can begin today. We don’t want to wait to start making a difference. And, in fact, we already have made some progress by bringing residents together with our partners and having conversations about things that matter; things that are impeding progress and preventing residents from living safe, healthy, productive lives. To demonstrate our commitment to transforming the neighborhood and to convince the naysayers we want to complete some early action activities during the two-year planning process. These are physical neighborhood improvements that designed to address some of the issues that have been identified through the Needs Assessment surveys or discussed in Task Force meetings. Admittedly, COVID-19 has hindered a lot of hands-on, face-to-face activities but we can still plan for a time when those limits are lessened.

- The planning team is still gathering a list of ideas for early action activities. Some of our ideas are:
- Identifying a series of vacant or abandoned lots for demolition.
- Cleaning and greening visible vacant and blighted sites along the main routes to the local schools to and from Donnelly Homes.
- Transforming a vacant lot into a memory garden to honor those whose lives have been lost and provide a safe place for remembrance.
- Park improvements at Capital City Complex and MLK Park.

These and other ideas will be discussed and prioritized with Donnelly Homes residents, neighbors and partners during upcoming Task Force Meetings in February.

## EARLY ACTION ACTIVITY IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

This will include a description of each early action activity, as well as a timeline for implementation and financing strategy. This strategy has yet been developed.

## ACTION ACTIVITIES

In addition to funding for the development of a plan, the Trenton Housing Authority received an award for Action Activities to be completed during the year and a half following the plan’s completion. These are also physical neighborhood improvements that will jumpstart transformation of the neighborhood. The Action Activity Committee will have its first meeting in December 2020 to discuss a set of criteria that will be used to review and rank proposed ideas. The Task Forces will be asked to submit ideas for Action Activities in January and February. All activities must be proposed to HUD for review and approval. The Action Activities Committee will continue to meet throughout the spring 2021 to evaluate and select activities to submit to HUD.

## DESCRIPTION OF ACTION ACTIVITIES

These activities have not yet been identified.

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

To track our progress, we will develop a detailed matrix summarizing all of the plan's goals, strategies, Early Action and Action Activities. It will include a timeframe, responsible partners, and metrics.

### HOUSING

#### GOAL 1: REIMAGINE DONNELLY HOMES AS A SAFE, VIBRANT MIXED-INCOME, INTERGENERATIONAL COMMUNITY.

Strategies	Metrics	Lead Agency & Partners	Timeframe (ST, MT, LT)	Leverage Resources
1. Work with...	No. new units	THA	MT	Existing Operating Funds

### PEOPLE

#### GOAL 1: IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES, WITH A FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH AND SPECIALTY PROVIDERS.

Strategies	Metrics	Lead Agency & Partners	Timeframe (ST, MT, LT)	Leverage Resources
1. Work with...	Increase no. services	City, THA	MT	Existing Operating Funds

### NEIGHBORHOOD

#### GOAL 1: FOCUS IMPROVEMENTS ON MLK BLVD AND THE STRETCH OF BRUNSWICK AVE THAT CONNECTS BATTLE MONUMENT TO MLK PARK, POOL, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

Strategies	Metrics	Lead Agency & Partners	Timeframe (ST, MT, LT)	Leverage Resources
1. Work with...	No. new businesses	City, THA	MT	Existing Operating Funds



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